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ADVICE FOR THOSE WHO EXERCISE
THE
MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION
THROUGH
CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION.

ADVICE FOR THOSE WHO EXERCISE
THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION THROUGH
CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

BEING

THE ABBÉ GAUME'S
MANUAL FOR CONFESSORS

OR HIS

EXTRACTS FROM THE WORKS OF S. FRANCIS DE SALES,
CHARLES BORROMEO, S. PHILIP DE NERI, S. FRANCIS XAVIER,
AND OTHER SPIRITUAL WRITERS

ABRIDGED, CONDENSED, AND
ADAPTED TO THE USE OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH

WITH A PREFACE
EMBODYING ENGLISH AUTHORITIES ON CONFESSION

BY THE

REV. E. B. PUSEY, D.D.

CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

SECOND EDITION.

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1878.

TO THE MEMORY
OF
THE RIGHT REVEREND
ALEXANDER PENROSE FORBES
BISHOP OF BRECHIN
THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED
BEGUN AMID HIS LOVING CO-OPERATION
CLOSED
WHEN GOD HAD WITHDRAWN THE GIFT
WHICH HE HAD BESTOWED
WHILE IT SEEMED HIM GOOD
UPON THE CHURCH
AND THOSE WHO LOVED HIM
BECAUSE THEY KNEW HIM.

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PREFACE OF THE EDITOR.

THE MANUAL (which, abridged, condensed and adapted to the circumstances and principles of the Church of England, is now, at last, given as one of the latest gifts which at the age of seventy-seven I can hope to give to my Mother, the Church of England) was my instructor, before the office of hearing Confessions found me, shrinking from it. Through the knowledge of souls and of the way, in which man may, by the grace of God, best draw them to God, it has very much, which may be useful to the Parish priest, whose people may not be led to use confession to man. All Parish priests have to minister to the sick and dying; to give advice to those who relapse, or are habitual sinners, or who will not give up proximate occasions of sin. All have to guard the young; some meet with the scrupulous. How best to profit by communions or meditation, it might fall to any one to teach. The intercourse with those who have been brought into contact with the inmost depths of the human soul, must be beneficial to all.

In supplying this help to those who minister in this special way to human souls, it is well to call to mind that this wide restoration of confession has been of God's Holy Spirit, through men's consciences and the teaching of our Prayer-book. Somewhat more than forty years ago, there was taught a strict doctrine of the great offensiveness and

iv *Confession, if desirable in sickness, desirable before.*

ingratitude of a Christian's sins, and of the minute searching accuracy of God's judgement in the Day of account, and a somewhat strict doctrine of repentance. Men asked, what should they do against that great Day? The Prayer-book gave the answer: "Here shall the sick man be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter." It is here represented as *desirable*, that the sick man should make special confession of his sins, if he have any weighty matter on his conscience. But clearly it could not be the mind of the Church of England, that those who have such weighty matters on their consciences should delay the confession of them to a sick bed, which they may never see, or when their minds may be too confused to speak or remember distinctly, or they may be too distracted by racking pain to confess as they should wish. "In the midst of life, we are in death." It must then be the mind of the Church of England, that whatever she holds it desirable to be confessed in death, should be confessed in life, while the mind is clear. "How could I have confessed all this amid the distractions of a sick bed?" many a soul has said, after having made the confession of the grave evil deeds of its life. The proverb says, "Better late, than never;" but the proverbial truth implies, "better still, not late." I do not mean that the Church of England recommends habitual confession; but I *do* mean that she does virtually recommend the confession at any time of any sin, which, if not confessed before, she would recommend to be confessed on the sick-bed. Yet what a mass of sins, which every body must hold to be "weighty matters," is implied (not to go further) by the fact, that tens or, I fear, hundreds of thousands gain their subsist-

ence through the daily sins of others; each of whom has, I suppose, been in each year the occasion or accomplice of the sins of some 365 persons. "You men," said one of them to one who was labouring to convert her, "have made us what we are."

2. On the other hand, it is a class of tender consciences, whom the Church of England contemplates in the exhortation before Holy Communion, who, although following the advice there given, "cannot quiet his own conscience herein," and whom in such case she advises to "open his grief" "to some discreet and learned minister of God's word," with a view primarily that he may receive the benefit of absolution, and secondarily (for it says "together with") ghostly counsel and advice. But since "grievous sins" and relapses after temporary remorse or penitence make up the life of too many, and Holy Communion is our "daily bread," it is clear that, according to her mind, there will be much confession of such as have fallen into deadly sin, or contrariwise of those whose consciences are tender and who feel "the burden" of *any* sin to be "intolerable."

However, I do not mean here to argue, but to state facts. It was a prevailing habit somewhat more than forty years ago, to speak lightly of sins committed before any one's conversion or marriage, when sins were broken off or the temptation to them ceased. The popular doctrine was what John Keble called the doctrine of Protestantism*,

* "The tradition which goes by the name of Justification by faith and which in reality means that one who has sinned and is sorry for it, is as if he had not sinned, blights and benumbs one in every limb, in trying to make people aware of their real state. And this is why I so deprecate the word and the idea of Protestantism, because it seems inseparable to me from 'Every one his own absolver;' that is, in other

"every man his own absolver," and since we are mostly on easy terms with ourselves, the terms of self-absolution were commonly very easy. It was a quiet easy-going time, and so repentance partook of the general easiness. There was apparently little memory of past deadly sin, except an occasional thankfulness, that anyone was no longer guilty of it. Abiding sorrow even for deadly and forgiven sin certainly was not part of their teaching. There was not even the "Would God I had never been such," which S. Augustine uses of the sins, into which he fell, when he was unbaptised and so not yet a member of Christ. No wonder then that an unqualified teaching of the gravity of post-Baptismal sin fell on people's hearts like a thunder-clap. It fell, doubtless, sometimes on tender consciences, whom God had not made sad. Some accused it of Novatianism, which of course could not have been, had there been any ordinary mention of confession or Absolution. Any how, I did not hear any mention of it, or make any.

The practice spread from conscience to conscience, before there was any oral teaching as to the remedy. Living men, whose minds were stirred, taught the nature of the disease; the Prayer-book, which the Church of England puts into the hands of all her children in their own language, taught the remedy. Without any other living teaching, men (for the enlarged use of confession *began with men*) men, whose consciences were awakened, learned to lay down the burden of their sins at our Dear Lord's Feet: and He, by virtue of His words, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them," said to

words the same as 'Peace where there is no peace,' and mere shadows of repentance." Keble's *Letters of Spiritual Guidance*. Letter xix. p. 40, written between 1846 and 1850.

their inmost souls, "Thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace." In those stirring times, people saw the change, wrought in the outward life of their acquaintance, and asked "what has changed you so?" The answer, "I have been to confession," suggested the thought, "Then it might be good for me too." There was, of course, a certain amount of oral teaching on the subject, outside of the Prayer-book^b, as in the Plain Sermons, 1842, by the Rev. John Keble, and in a Preface to the Third Part of the Paradise, 1845. Older clergy told me of remarkable instances of confession and restitution, long before our Tractarian days. Even in tepid days the Prayer-book awakened single consciences. It was from circumstances of the times only, that controversialists have said, that more attention was drawn to the teaching by a Sermon of mine before the University, "The entire Absolution of the Penitent," 1846, because it occurred in a course of Sermons on "Comforts to the penitent," which had been broken by my suspension for my previous Sermon in that course. To repeat what I said publicly eleven years ago with the freshness of relatively recent memory;

^b The subject of Mr. Wordsworth's sermon on "Evangelical repentance," 1841 was, That "the direct testimony of Holy Scripture is much less full and less definite upon the doctrine of the forgiveness of deadly sins after baptism, than (to judge from the tone and language of much of our modern preaching) is often imagined;—that, in fact, it is *scanty*; and no more than sufficient to prove what our Church teaches in her 16th Article." The remedy which he suggested was public discipline, which, of course, included individual absolution, at its close, that absolution restoring the sinner to the sacraments from which the Church would have previously shut him out. "That the safe, and divinely-appointed way for the recovery of fallen Christians would seem to be by ecclesiastical discipline, ending in Ministerial Absolution—both from the testimony of Scripture and the practice of the primitive Church."

viii *Confession and absolution taught by Prayer-book.*

“^c The Prayer-book, not we, taught confession. As a fact, the practice of confession was revived, while [scarce] a word was said about Absolution. The teaching followed the practice; and as it began, so has it continued. The use of confession among us all, priests and people, is very large. It pervades every rank, from the peer to the artisan or the peasant. In the course of this quarter of a century (to instance my own experience, which I must know), I have been applied to, to receive confessions from persons in every rank, of every age, old as well as young, in every profession, even those which you would think least accessible to it—army, navy, medicine, law. But in almost every case (I mean, except some very few in which I suggested it from my knowledge of the individual) the desire came from the persons themselves. And what has been my own experience, has been, as far as I have gathered it, the experience of other clergy. You may think the practice of confession unwise; but you, I am sure, would not restrict our liberty of conscience, and I may say that, in the case of distressing, habitual, and very real sins of young men, they have found confession of the greatest benefit in conquering them. They have been made better members of society through it.”

I was even scrupulous at that time not to suggest confession to those who individually consulted me. I wished the desire for it to come from themselves, or (as I hoped) from the motions of the Holy Spirit. I wished also that it should be clear, that this revival of confession was the work of God, not of man. One thing I was earnest about, to bring whom I could to repentance for sin, for the love of Him Who has so loved us, our Lord Jesus Christ.

^c In *The Times*, Nov. 13, 1866.

My own private conviction was, that if men would review their lives as a whole, bring before themselves all their past sins, the result would be to long to hear our Lord's absolving voice. But this, as all besides, I left to the teaching of God the Holy Ghost in their hearts. I did not interpose my own.

Nothing was said at that time about the *necessity* of confession. Those who feel a disease do not want to be taught about the *necessity* of a cure. They went to the Great Physician and to those whom He had constituted, under Himself, as physicians of souls. They spake *His* word, and *He* healed them.

And now after more than forty years, during which no one pretends that any knowledge of evil has ever been conveyed through the practice, a storm has been raised against it, which is too well-timed, not to leave some doubt as to the honesty of those who have been raising it. I speak not of the honourable men who have been instruments of raising it, and who thought that they were discharging a public duty in bringing the subject before the legislature, but of the unseen instigators, perhaps I may say of the unseen Instigator, against whose kingdom confession is directed. Here too it may be said, "^dThe devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

The plea has been too well adapted to the English mind. ^ePeople, ill-informed and inconsiderate, have made a sweeping charge against the practice, as invading the sacredness

^d Rev. xii. 12.

* Dr. Perowne has thought it worth while to animadvert on this sentence which he says, I "wrote in a style, with which we are all familiar." He subjoins, "I do not know whether Dr. Pusey would place the late Bishop of Exeter and Mr. Bennett, the Vicar of Frome, in the class of

of the Christian family. Because in certain books, a series of questions upon the commandments has been set down, under the head, "How to question the ill-in-

'people ill-informed and inconsiderate,' but we see what their opinion is of such Manuals as those for which Dr. Pusey apologises."

Dr. Perowne will excuse me, if I point out that he has been betrayed into the same paralogism, which he committed before in his animadversions on my book on Daniel the Prophet (in our old Oxford language, the conversion of an affirmative major premiss). I said in that book, that the *Germans* who denied the genuineness of Daniel, were already rationalists, and that approaching that book, as rationalists, they could not but disbelieve its genuineness; for if they had believed a book which contained definite prophecy, they must have given up their disbelief. I pointed out this as an historical fact. The disbelief was the parent of the criticism, not the criticism of the disbelief. I said this, because it was a mischievous fallacy of the day, that the advanced criticism had overthrown the belief in the genuineness of Daniel, whereas the disbelief was only a foregone conclusion of those who already disbelieved all definite Prophecy. Dr. Perowne then represented me as saying, that Dr. Arnold who disbelieved the genuineness of Daniel (which I did not even know) was a rationalist. I said that the *Germans* who first attacked the genuineness of Daniel were rationalists before they attacked it. Dr. Perowne represented me as saying, *All* who have disbelieved the genuineness of Daniel have been rationalists.

So now. Alluding to the recent declamations against the practice of confession in controversial or irreligious periodicals, newspapers, or platforms &c. I said, that "people ill-informed and inconsiderate have made a sweeping charge against the practice, as invading the sacredness of the Christian family." Dr. Perowne says that he does not know whether I would place the late Bishop of Exeter &c. in the same class; as though I had said, "*all* who ever spoke against confession have been ill-informed and inconsiderate." Bishop Philpotts was not speaking of confession at all, but only of a popular R. C. book of devotion, in which the detail of the questions would in fact supersede all such questions in hearing confession. Mr. Bennett was writing against "*forced* auricular confession," whereas the recent declamation has been against *all* confession. I used the words "ill-informed and inconsiderate" (they are very mild words, applying to the mistaken ground of attack, which these persons were not at the pains to understand) of those, who attacked the use of confession in the English Church as a whole. To Bishop Philpotts I explained my own practice as to hearing confessions, (as I did to Bishop Blomfield and Bishop Wilberforce in whose dioceses I chiefly heard confessions) and they were satisfied with my explanations. Bp. Philpotts claimed confession as belonging to the Church of England.

structed," it has been assumed, that those who hear the confessions of the *well-instructed* wives and daughters of our carefully guarded English homes, put questions upon the seventh commandment, which parents or husbands would not like to hear. Nothing, of course, can be more wholly untrue. The insinuated lie is worthy of its father. Its pleas have been the following.

i. In *some* manuals of Christian practice and devotion, in which the duty of *self-examination* is incidentally treated of, people have been taught how to examine themselves, with much greater nakedness of language, than I myself think advisable. I remember how, above 30 years ago, a mother complained of having found such a popular Roman Catholic manual among her daughter's books, which she had procured for herself. That manual is one of large circulation among their poor, and since questions of self-examination are like a large net, which is meant to enclose all sorts of consciences, good or bad, it contained questions, which a good conscience would see, at a glance, were not intended for it. Such a conscience would pass them by unread, just as it does not notice certain words in Holy Scripture or the Prayer-book¹. Yet I remember its being said that people were becoming "too refined for their Bibles." Of course, the fault was in themselves. A well-intentioned man published, many years ago, an expurgated edition of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. I remember how an intellectual boy read through Gibbon, for the history's

¹ Dr. Perowne says, "Never was anything weaker than Dr. Pusey's defence of a Roman Manual of this sort" (p. 36). I said nothing to *defend* it. On the contrary, I spoke of it as one which used "much greater nakedness of language than I myself think advisable." But in honesty, I thought it right to add, that I did not think that those questions, naked as they were, would do harm to the pure in heart.

sake, without observing that it contained any thing against faith or purity.

But accusers have not observed, that the existence of such books of self-examination is only a safeguard the more against their scare-crow, imagined questions in the confessional. *The* object of self-examination is self-knowledge; not, confession. Self-knowledge is a Christian duty. A person cannot repent or confess to God sins, which he knows not of. Since then any one, who hears confessions, may take it for granted that those who confess have used books of self-examination, which contain questions, more or less explicit, on all the commandments, he is the more entirely exempted from questioning about any one. A confessor would, as a matter of course, not suspect any one of any grave sin, of which he did not accuse himself. These accusers would not imagine that a confessor would ask, "Did you ever commit murder?" In books of self-examination, the sixth commandment would be treated of as well as the seventh. It is then only the evil imagination of the accusers, which makes them think that questions would be asked as to the one commandment, which would not be asked as to the other. I doubt not that any one who had received confessions among us, would, if asked, repudiate, as abhorrent from him, the idea that he would ask any question whatever of any one, as to the seventh commandment, unless the person making the con-

The class for whom I should fear, would be the opposite class, minds which were curious about evil, and who might use such a book (as many have the Bible) to acquire a knowledge of evil.

Dr. Perowne proceeds: "As if such words in Holy Scripture or the Prayer-book were given to children as parts of self-examination *with a view to confession!*" The question was not about children at all. No one would put into the hands of children any book with reference to sins which, by reason of their age, they could not commit.

fession began the subject by owning that they had something against it to confess^s.

ii. The second plea has been from certain questions which the accusers found in some Roman books, overlooking or ignorant of the peculiar circumstances which their use presupposes. They were of two classes, as they stood in Latin in the original of the Manual of Confessors. I have omitted them in this translation, as unadapted to our circumstances. The one set was for ignorant persons; the other for a general confession, the object of which was to elicit from unwilling persons, who had never been really penitent and had lived in grievous deadly sin, the confession of sins, which the person had concealed, through shame, all his life, still going habitually to confession, but in fact, consciously lying in every confession, pretending to do, what he had never done and had no thought of doing, confess all his deadly sins.

We have only to do with ourselves in the English Church; and, confession to man being voluntary among us, neither of these classes would come to confession at all. With us, no one confesses, except with the purpose of leading a new life, by the grace of God. Those only would come, whose consciences God had stirred; and consciences which God stirred, He would enlighten. Since, with us, confession is voluntary, whatever any person might have

^s Dr. Perowne asks "How does Dr. Pusey know that questions are *not* put on the seventh Commandment, 'which parents or husbands would not like to hear?' Unless he has been present at all the confessions made in the English Church during the last forty years, he cannot establish his negative." The source of my knowledge is the united and unanimous voice of all who have any experience in hearing confessions. And this is in accordance with the instincts of human nature. I might retort, since Dr. Perowne has of course not been present at any one confession, he has no ground for encouraging the imputation that they are.

xiv *Those who confess among us, having been quickened*

to confess, would be those very sins, the memory and weight of which drove him to confession. This would be the "burden" which was "intolerable," which he came to lay down at our Dear Lord's Feet. A person who feels a burden to be too heavy for him to bear alone, does not keep it upon his shoulders or on his heart. Our Lord has stricken the rock, and by His grace the waters flow. We have then no occasion for questioning at all, except to help anyone to say what he wishes to say, or as to the frequency of the sin confessed; and this, with the view of deepening the contrition, by God's grace. For if the sins confessed are deadly sins, then each separate sin is a separate deadly offence against the infinite Love of our God. If the confession extends over years, then, it often produces a deeper contrition, to see, for the first time, the amount of the deadly heap. "I have," the soul says, "for, it may be, 20 years, committed such a sin against my God every week. I have then committed 1000 of these sins against His infinite Love."

The problem of B. Leonard was altogether different; how best to induce unwilling souls to do, what they had, all their lives long, been professing to do, but had never done,—honestly to confess their sins. It became then a necessity with him, to dwell even chiefly upon that commandment, upon which, generally, questions are most to be avoided.

So again as to ignorance. Of course, we have superabundance of ignorance among what people accustom themselves to call our degraded or outcast populations in London; such as those, whom such Clergy as those of S. Alban's Holborn have won in large numbers to the love of God. My own experience has not been in that class.

Sin blinds the sinner. But I think that the difference again lies between voluntary and involuntary confession. In Italy or France I should suppose that it might often happen, that e. g. a Neapolitan or Parisian, careless for the rest of the year, might go to confession before Easter, to fulfil his "Easter duties." Many every where wish to serve God as cheaply as they can. It is better, and God is less dishonoured, if His creatures break off their sins even for a month in the year, than if they break with Him altogether. Such an one (if he went to confession at all) would go without serious sifting of his conscience; and if he were to confess at all, would need to be helped to sift it. If, on the other hand, a person, out of whatever previous state, were roused to the sense of his sins in one of our missions, he would know and would have vividly before him, what he had to confess.

There is yet another field of Roman usages, which I should think of extreme difficulty, viz. the confession of mental sins which aggravated the actual sins confessed; in relation to which writers suggest questions for *ill*-instructed souls. These questions have often seemed to me over-minute and superfluous, and I know not how some of them could be put without the risk of teaching evil, happily unknown. They could not, any how, without circuitous preliminaries. Nor do I myself see any good in their being put at all. Our business in this respect is, to guard persons against relapses into sin; to teach true contrition, how to gain the victory over indurated habits; and this can be done by God's grace, without these minute enquiries. National characters also, and so, within certain limits, temptations and sins vary. I should hope that it would be unwise to put these questions in our Roman

Catholic population. Certainly, it would be to our Irish peasantry.

Roman writers themselves feel the extreme difficulty, and frequently warn confessors, that it is better to leave the material confession incomplete, than to run any risk of teaching the penitent the knowledge of any sin, of which he was happily ignorant. For myself, speaking broadly and having reference to questions, which I have omitted out of the earlier part of the Manual, I think it far safer not to use those questions at all. On looking over them carefully, I do not remember that, in nearly 40 years, I ever asked one of them: and I am quite sure that the confessions which I heard, were accepted and blessed by God. For they stood our Blessed Lord's test, "by their fruits ye shall know them."

The wickedness of the adversary has consisted in this, that, knowing, (as he could know) nothing of the facts, he has insinuated, that questions of this sort would be asked of the modest wives and daughters of our English homes, who are happily guarded from knowledge of evil, and who would know nothing of the subject.

Throughout the declamation against an unhappy book, in which "questions for the *ill*-instructed" were inserted (mistaken as I believe them to have been and have said that they were), it has been entirely ignored that they were for the *ill*-instructed. The limitation "for the *ill*-instructed" shews to any who *would* see, that they *were not* for any besides; else the limitation "for the *ill*-instructed" would not have been inserted; yet the declamation has throughout assumed that those questions are for all, the *well*-instructed also, the modest, the refined, those of whom no one could imagine any evil. In all the declamation of

the last few months, I have not seen a single allusion to this limitation. Yet it must have changed the whole line of attack. Instead of a vague coarse and libellous declamation against all Clergy who hear confessions, the question raised must have been, "Are there, among our people, any so immersed in ignorance, that, if Almighty God should lead them to repentance, they should have committed such sins as these, and yet not know that they had committed them?" My own experience has brought me in contact with the poorer but not with the ignorant classes, as it did the compiler of that unpublished book, who laboured zealously among them. And he is withdrawn from his labours, so that he cannot tell us, whether, in his experience of many years, he met with such. Intense as the ignorance of some is, who have shut themselves out from all contact with the Church, so that they know neither the name of God, except by swearing, nor that of Jesus, nor even the Lord's Prayer, nor the Ten Commandments, except such of them as human law enforces upon them by its penalties, I do not believe that any whom God calls to Himself would not be enlightened by Him as to the slough, in which they had lived. If they were, there could be no occasion for any of these questions; for those whose minds God had quickened, would, if they used confession, accuse themselves, and would need no such remembrancers. But this fallacy, that questions, especially said to be for the *ill*-instructed, were intended for the *well*-instructed, is continued to this hour. Dr. Perowne italicises the expression, "The questions *directed to be made* [The qualification that they were *directed to be made* only "of the *ill*-instructed" he in his haste here omits, although he himself quotes it elsewhere ^b] in the Priest in Absolution,

^a p. 35.

^b

xviii *Statement as to questions, calumnies upon those*

may at least justify the alarm, which he [I] thinks so foolish." The alarm, which, I am sure, is so unfounded, relates to our well-instructed and guarded English families. I have rejected all such questions; but questions *directed to be made* of the *ill-instructed* do not justify any alarm as to the *well-instructed*.

An eminently Conservative Journal, in reviewing the prospect for good or evil to the English Church, carries on the cry; "The revelation of the manner, in which the more seriously sacerdotal party within the Church were seeking to revive the practice of confession *in some of its most demoralising and revolting forms*, was a shock to the whole system, hardly comparable to anything short of a necessary but painful surgical operation."

It is contrary to natural instinct to ask questions on that commandment of any one, man, woman or child, who did not shew that they had something to confess upon it. An intelligent person of the middle class said, "I do not go in for these things; but the English Clergy are gentlemen, and I do not believe that they would ask such questions." Great injustice has been done not to us only, but to our English families. But for our habitual English reserve and modesty, and the nature of the subject, in which people cannot even repudiate calumny without a sense of defilement, there would have been one burst of indignation at these implications, that our English Clergy would have asked such questions of our English wives or daughters, *or that they would have borne such questions*.

Those who, in their passionate attacks upon confession, have, with epithets too filthy to repeat, denounced a particular book, and all confession on the ground of that book,

The Standard, Oct. 10.

have themselves been the calumniators of the well-educated and pure-minded wives and daughters of our English families, who have used and do use confession, as a means of removing, by the help of God, those lesser infirmities which cleave to our regenerate nature, until "death be swallowed up in victory." They who have acted the zealot for the purity of our English families, have themselves libelled them, as though they would have allowed their ears to be profaned by what was unbecoming for a pure-minded woman to hear. However unscrupulous some had heretofore shewn themselves, as to the weapons which they used, or the allies with whom they united themselves, it is strange that, even in their hatred of confession, they should have flung pitch broadcast in a way, in which it must involve those, of whose pure-mindedness they professed themselves to be the protectors, those, whose purity is the bliss and protection and true dignity of our English families, a fruit of the grace of God, and one of the best earnestness of a happy future of our country.

These accusations must have their reaction. Those who have been deluded by them will be shocked, at least, at their own credulity, and will be ashamed of their panic, as Englishmen are of the credulity of their forefathers in believing as to the plot ascribed to Titus Oates.

In this panic men have ignored that the author of, and tempter to, evil is ever busy with souls, and they have aided his work by insinuating that the teacher of evil is, not himself but the Priest. "There are some sins of young men," I had occasion once to say to Bp. Wilberforce, "for which confession is *the* remedy." He said emphatically, "It is."

Enough on the hateful subject. Fanaticism, having

been, by the Bennett judgement, baffled in its attack upon our faith, turned to assail the ritual, used by some. Succeeding but partially in this, it has tried to inflame the English people by calumnious insinuations as to matters, upon which it can absolutely know nothing, and which no one can refute, because no one is attacked. Such weapons cannot prosper. Conscience is too strong for them. Those into whose hearts God shall put it to pour out their griefs will continue to do it, and the accuser will probably find, as heretofore, that his speaking against the truth will help to direct men's thoughts to it. Declamations against confession will direct people's thoughts inwards, and the conscience will ask, Will it not be good for me?

We, then, who know the value of confession, shall continue to minister to those who come to us. Its continuance will remain with people's consciences. No declamation will dam up what the soul wishes to pour forth. "*Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.*" Conscience is incompressible as water. It will find its way through the iron-ball, wherein people would confine it.

But it would be well, if those who are so diligent in declaiming against confession, which we know to be a remedy or a preventative of sin, would set themselves specifically and earnestly to withstand the sins, through which it has been supposed that more souls perish than through any other,—sins against the 7th Commandment. A Christian widow-lady, who shrank not from seeking out lost women in the wretched dens, in which misery, hopelessness, drink and debt kept them fast-bound, and whose Christian love was indefatigable and fertile in expedients to allure and to extricate them, was met with discouragement, that the efforts were useless, except for those indi-

should themselves seek other ways to protect purity. xxi

vidual souls; for, according to the great law of commercial policy, "the supply was" every where "equal to the demand." True, if they were not souls, for whom Jesus died, to whom she was His messenger and apostle, to rescue them from the jaws of the lion! But who then are the causes of all this misery, whose victims in this Christian land are the hundreds of thousands, countless? The writer of that book, popular through the Christian courage and chivalry of its writer and the resourcefulness of her Christian love, owns truly, that no remedy will be found, until men learn that these, whose sin they occasion, of whose degradation they are the cause, whom, but for the arresting love of Jesus, they would drag down with themselves to the bottomless pit, are their sisters in Christ.

But where then do men learn their sins? Those, who declaim against confession, declaim especially against the use of it, at an early age, e. g. in boyhood. I said publicly eleven years ago, "^k I believe that it is the experience of those who have heard confessions, that in cases where there has been sin against the 7th Commandment, it has been the exception, where sin, which has, perhaps, desolated or blighted the subsequent life, has not been first fully known, either at 8 or 12 years old, their first or their second school, or the date of their free intercourse with other boys. And what has been specially miserable has been, that almost uniformly sin was not known to be sin, until it had a hold upon the sufferer. All this might be prevented by the simplest, most modest questions, if parents were not afraid of the whole subject. They shrink from an imagined risk of conveying hurtful knowledge, which Satan has taught long before, not for prevention,

^k Letter in *The Times*, Dec. 12, 1866.

but in temptation. I have ventured to say this on this delicate subject, because no one who does not already know to what I allude—no lady who reads your paper—can in the least understand it, or be supposed by others to understand it.”

One, who knew nothing of confession, neither having made nor heard one, said that evils; such as I alluded to, were “best, with the very barest exception, ignored.” I answered¹; “The plan of ‘ignoring’ has been tried. I remember many years ago the Head Master of a large school refusing to allow of a book of self-examination being circulated in his school, unless all allusion to the 7th Commandment were omitted. And at that time every boy probably in the school knew all which that very respectable Head Master wished to keep from them. And what has been the result of ‘ignoring?’ Fifty years ago, before the intercourse with the Continent^m had been much renewed, I have reason to believe that that sin was unknown at most of our public schools. Now, alas! it is the besetting trial of our boys; it is sapping the constitutions and injuring in many the fineness of intellect.

¹ Letter in *The Times*, Dec. 14, 1866.

^m I did not say this, in reference to any particular countries, as if such sins were prevalent (as a Roman Controversialist imputed to me) in countries nominally Roman Catholic. I spoke of the *Continent* of Europe, of which a large portion has been rent from the Roman Church. But even in countries, nominally Roman, there must be too many, who belong to the body of the Church, not to its soul: many also belong to no religious body at all. Even of France the late gifted and observant Abp. of Paris, Mgr. Darboy, said to me ‘We have lost the middle classes.’ I meant simply to mark a date, as suggested by the ignorance as to the sin, in our largest public school at that time. It was then, I believe, a continental sin, at that time happily unknown to it. Books, containing remedies for it, had some years ago a separate head in some German book-catalogues, which, when I was enquiring about remedies for it, were procured for me.

‘If I had but known confession then,’ (it has often been said to me, and now is written to me), ‘I should not have had all this misery.’ And I know that confession became a remedy against this evil, when its victim had long struggled in vain.”

I will only instance further, that in a school, which I do not know, at a date which I do not know, but sometime past (so there can be no imputation of a violation of the seal), before confession, out of 100 boys, 10 only were innocent; after confession, 68: the more aggravated forms of the sin fell from 66 to 4.

My object, however, now is not to insist on the value of confession, but to urge that those who declaim against confession, should do what in them lies against a terrible evil. To ‘ignore’ it, is to foster it, and to leave free scope to Satan. The evil of which I write is, I have understood, absolutely unknown in schools, where confession is habitually used. “My seminarists,” said the Bishop of Coutances to me in 1866, “are pure as the angels.” But, apart from confession, very much might be done to check evil, if those who have the care of schools did but preach positively on purity. “We do not know,” said a middle-aged Clergyman to me, some years past, who was educated at Winchester, “what we owe to Dr. Moberly. He preached to us ‘purity,’ ‘purity,’ ‘purity.’” I said in this correspondence of many years past, “I believe that parents might save countless ills to their sons by this simple rule, ‘Do nothing, when alone, which you would be ashamed of your mother and my knowing.’ I have known evil stopped by the simple words, ‘Remember, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.’ I do not, then, believe that there is any occasion for the de-

tailed questions to which S. G. O. refers. I believe that the conscience may be quickened without them."

The devoted writer of "*Work in Brighton*," herself a lady, urges the same upon "every mother for the sake of her own boys, not to remain any longer in sinful ignorance, as we have hitherto been content to do, but to face this subject; never to send a boy unwarned and unarmed to a public school. I would entreat you not to leave this vital point to a father's influence; remember that in your own womanhood you have a potent weapon of defence for your boy, which no man can have. See that he knows all he ought to know from pure lips, and not have to gather it from the impure talk of school-boys, innocent curiosity being too often the source of much evil. Teach him from his earliest years the sacredness of his body, that it is a temple of the Holy Ghost, not his own to do what he likes with, but subjected to certain physical and moral laws imposed by an infinite Will, the violation of which must lead to its derangement, and to ill results which must fall on others, as well as himself; for never let him think he can sin and suffer alone; and entreat him never to indulge in actions and talk which he would be ashamed for you to know of, or which he knows would bring a blush to his sister's cheek."

However, it is not for me to suggest ways, in which others should meet what all who value souls would acknowledge to be a terrible evil, if they would believe its existence. I only meant, "let them not, in their declamations against confession, shut their eyes against the evil, or imply that its teachers must be those whose aim is, by God's grace, to exterminate it."

" p. 43. Hatchard's.

“What I have asked for,” and do ask for, on the side of those who do not use it, was the continuance of the same charitable temper which was so tenderly expressed in our first English Prayer-book, ‘Requiring such as shall be satisfied with a general confession not to be offended with them that do use, to their further edifying, the auricular and private confession to the priest; nor those which think needful or convenient, for the quieting of their own consciences, particularly to open their sins to the priest, to be offended with them that are satisfied with their humble confession to God, and the general confession to the Church; but in all things to follow and keep the rule of charity, and every man to be satisfied with his own conscience, not judging other men’s minds and consciences, whereas he hath no warrant of God’s Word to the same.’”

What I and others desire is, that we should, both clergy and laity, be free to do what we severally think right before God, not abridging the liberty of others.

I had thought that we might, in these days, have dispensed with any defence of the practice of confession, as being authorised by the formularies of the English Church. An appeal however has been made to the Queen, in the name of “religious liberty” “to repress the practice of Auricular confession which is so repugnant to the consciences and feelings of this Protestant Country.” I should be thankful to know that well nigh any thing is “repugnant to the consciences and feelings of this Protestant *Country*,” in which every sin is so rife, of which intoxication is characteristic in all Europe, (wherever English, of the lower classes, are found) and is admitted to be increasing, and

° Letter to *The Times*, Nov. 1866.

which has of late years invented a Divorce-court, in which every undefended cause is notoriously a case of collusion, viz. the wife sinned by agreement with her husband, that they might be rid of one another, and free to contract new unions, in which neither party can respect the other, even if they are not the forerunners of future unfaithfulness. But for the question of Protestantism, certainly this is so far a Protestant *country*, seeing there are so many dissenters in it who are undoubtedly Protestants, only they have no particular ground to meddle with us, as we do not with them, so long as they remain apart, though it is of course our duty to win them if, by God's grace, we can. But (to argue on their own ground first) "are then confession and absolution un-Protestant?" The Lutherans are eminently Protestants, because, historically, this title belongs to them. Having only a Presbyterian succession, they have lost the "power of the keys," and with it they have lost the use of them as to giving Absolution. But at first their belief was clear.

· "P As to confession, they teach that private Absolution is to be retained in the churches, although the enumeration of all offences is not necessary in confession. For it is impossible, according to the Psalm, Who understandeth his offences?" And "¶ Confession in the Churches is not abolished among us; for the Body of the Lord is not wont to be given save to those who have before been examined and absolved, and the people is taught most diligently as to the faith of the Absolution, of which before there was great silence. Men are taught greatly to value Absolution, because

¶ Conf. Aug. P. i. Art. xi.

¶ Ib. P. ii. Artic. in quib. recensentur abusus mutati. Art. iv. de confess.

it is the voice of God and pronounced at the command of God. The power of the keys is commanded : and it is mentioned, what consolation it brings to terrified consciences ; and that God requires faith that we should believe that Absolution, as a voice sounding from heaven [the German has, “not less than if the voice of God sounded from heaven”] and that that faith in Christ truly obtains and receives remission of sins. But of Confession they teach, that enumeration of offences is not necessary, nor are consciences to be burdened by the charge of enumerating all transgressions, because it is impossible to recite all offences, as the Psalm attests &c. But if no sins were remitted, except those recited, consciences could never rest, because they neither see nor can remember many sins. But confession is retained among us, both on account of the very great benefit of Absolution and also for other advantages to consciences¹.” In the Apology for the Confession “it is

¹ This last Article is so far varied in the *Confessio Variata* that it begins, “But since confession gives occasion for imparting Absolution privately, and the rite itself preserves in the people the understanding of the power of the keys and the remission of sins, besides that that conference very greatly profiteth to admonish and instruct men, we diligently retain Confession of sins in the Churches &c.

² Apol. Confess. c. vi. n. 2. Bishop Charles Wordsworth observed many years ago, while yet a Priest [1842], “It is right that those who are content to look *no higher* than the Reformation, and so decline all appeal to the practice of the primitive Church, should bear in mind what the opinion and avowed principle even of the *foreign Reformers*—of the *true and original Protestants* themselves, was upon this point, however little it has been acted out by those who profess to be their followers.”

Besides the Augsburg Confession, he quoted the *Saxon Confession offered to the Council of Trent, A.D. 1551*. “As to the making private Confession to the Pastors, we affirm that the rite of private Absolution is to be retained in the Church, and we do constantly retain it for many grave causes.” C. xvi. De Pœnitentia. Lindan. Apol. P. ii. p. 128. *The Wittenberg Confession* professes (c. de Pœnit.) “that sins are always to be acknowledged, and that penitence is always to be enacted in this life,

repeated, "We too retain confession, chiefly for the sake of the Absolution, which is the Word of God which the power of the keys pronounces as to individuals with Divine authority. Wherefore it would be impious to take away private absolution out of the Church. Nor do they understand what is remission of sins or the power of the keys, whoever despise private Absolution. But we have said above in the Confession that we think that enumeration of offences is not necessary of Divine right."

And since so much is said as to the agreement of our use of confession with that in the Church of Rome, I may add that 'the Pontifical answer to the Confession of Augsburg approves of its article, only requiring two additions: 1) that confession should be required every year: 2) that preachers should exhort to diligent examination of conscience and confession of the sins which people remembered upon that examination. Else it says, "that in the xith article they [the Lutherans] acknowledge, that private Absolution together with confession is to be retained in the Church, is accepted as Catholic and agreeable to our faith, because Absolution is confirmed by the word of Christ. For Christ saith to the Apostles, John xx. Whose sins ye remit they are remitted to them."

In the Articles of Smalcald, signed by the chief Lutherans A.D. 1537 and received among their symbolical books, it is said, "the keys are the office and power of the Church,

that after confession of sins faith in the Absolution may be conceived 'privately' Ibid. quoted by Bp. Overall in Nichol's Additional Notes. "'The Ordinance of the Lunenburg Church' enjoins very severely that the Eucharist should not be given to any one save after Confession, and absolved by private Absolution; forbidding that Pastors thenceforth should absolve two or three together."

' Responsio ad Conf. Aug. Pontificia, ad Art. xi.

" Art. vii. de Clavibus. Art. viii. de Confessione.

given by Christ to bind and loose sins, not the enormous only and manifest sins, but also subtle hidden, known to God alone, as is written in the 19th Psalm, 'Who understandeth his offences?' Since Absolution and the power of the keys is also a consolation and help against sin and an evil conscience, instituted by Christ Himself in the Gospel, confession and Absolution are by no means to be abolished in the Church, especially on account of tender and timid consciences and on account of indisciplined and petulant youth, that they may be heard, examined, and instructed in Christian doctrine. And since private Absolution springeth from the power of the keys, it is not to be neglected, but to be made of the greatest account, as other offices also of the Christian Church are greatly to be accounted of."

The Lutheran body also adapted from Luther, as a symbolical book, his lesser Catechism. One * chapter was "on confession, how those of the simpler sort were to be instructed in it." It begins, "Confession compriseth two things, one, to confess sins, the other, to receive Absolution or remission from the Confessor or preacher of the Gospel, as if from God Himself, and not to doubt but firmly to believe that, through that Absolution, the sins are remitted before God in heaven. The second question is, what sins are to be confessed? Before God we ought to place ourselves as guilty of all sins, even those which are hidden from us, as we do in the Lord's Prayer, but, before the minister, we ought only to confess the sins which are known to us and which we feel in our hearts."

He also provides a brief form of confession for those of

* Catech. minor c. 5.

xxx *Luther's lesser Catechism. Absolution called*

the ruder sort, "Thou oughtest in this wise to address the minister of the word, 'Reverend and beloved lord, I pray thee to hear my confession and announce to me the remission for God's sake.' 'I, miserable sinner, confess before God that I am guilty of all sins ; especially I confess before thee that I am a manservant, maidservant &c . . but that I have not served my master faithfully, for I have not and do not do what he enjoins me : I have vexed and moved my master or mistress to swear : I have neglected many things and given occasion to loss &c : In words and deeds I have been petulant impatient obstreperous &c. [The German adds, I have been angry with my equals, quarrelled with my wife and cursed]. Therefore I grieve, ask for grace, promise amendment.' A master or mistress has a different form suggested to them : ' First, I confess before thee, that I have not been diligent in the faithful education and instruction of my children or family to the glory of God ; I have blasphemed, abused the Name of God, given a bad example by speaking and doing wrong things, have injured my neighbours, detracted from many, used wrong weights and measures, deceived my neighbour in the articles which I sold &c : and whatever besides occurs in the vocation of each against the Commandments of God.' It is added ; "but if any does not feel himself laden with these or graver sins, let him not be anxious nor seek or invent sins nor make confession a torture ; but recite one or other sins which he knows as—especially I confess that I abused the Name of God, used unchaste words, neglected this or that &c. So let his mind be at rest." The minister is to answer, "God be propitious to thee and confirm thy faith. Amen." "Let him also ask the person confessing, 'Dost thou believe my remission to be the remission of God?'

Let him further say to the person affirming and believing 'Be it unto thee, as thou believest, and I, by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, remit to thee thy sins in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' But if any have consciences afflicted, tempted, sad, the minister shall comfort them with many sentences of Scripture tending to the increase of faith." The chapter closes, "This which we have mentioned is only a childish and common form of confession for the simpler and ruder sort."

The preface to the 'Formula of Concord' states that "all the Churches of the Confession of Augsburg approved and received these catechisms. So that they were propounded publicly in Churches and schools and some private houses."

The Apology for the Confession of Augsburg says, "Absolution can properly be called the sacrament of penance, as also the more learned Scholastic theologians speak."

The negotiations carried on by Henry viii with the German Protestant Princes (although, happily for us, finally broken off by him) brought Cranmer into contact with their work. We have accordingly to all appearance the article on Confession as framed by the German reformers, together with corrections or additions by Cranmer as he thought necessary. The Lutheran theory of justification gleams through here and there, but is not pronounced, so that Cranmer may have understood all in a right sense. The portion relating to Confession is,

¹ Form. Conc. P. ii. Proœm. n. vi. Mathesius (vi. Pred. v. Luth. Lehre &c. Nürnbg. 1592) says "in our times above 100,000 copies have been printed, and it has been brought in languages of all sorts into foreign lands, and all Latin and German schools,"

² c, v. art. xii. n. 31.

“^a But since the greater part of the Christian people knows not these things which make up penitence, nor understands how true penitence is to be enacted, nor knows where remission of sins is to be hoped for, in order that it may in all these things be better instructed and taught, preachers and pastors ought, not only in public Sermons to inform the people thereon and sincerely to preach from the sacred Scriptures what is true penitence, but we also say that the confession of sins, which is called auricular and is made privately to the ministers of the Church, is exceedingly useful and in the highest degree necessary.” [Cranmer proposed to substitute “most advantageous” (*commodissimam*) for “in the highest degree necessary” (*summe necessarium*).]

“Which confession is by all means to be retained in the Church and to be made great account of, both for the instruction of inexperienced persons in the Word of God and other advantages not few, (of which we shall speak presently) and also chiefly on account of the benefit of absolution, that is, the remission of sins, which in this confession is offered and exhibited to those who confess through absolution and the power of the keys, according to that of Christ, John xx. Whose sins ye do remit &c. Which absolution ought to be certainly believed: for it is the voice of the Gospel, whereby the minister through the Word, not in his own name but in the Name and authority of Christ, announces and offers remission of sins to him who confesseth. Which voice of the Gospel, sounding through the minister, when he who confesseth believeth

^a A book taken from a bundle of Abp. Cranmer's papers in the State Paper Office Art. xi. in Cranmer's Works T. iv. pp. 282—285 ed. Jenkyns. See his preface T. i. pp. xx.—xxiii. I have translated it.

with a certain faith and assenteth thereto, at once his conscience becomes certain of the remission of sins, and he setteth certainly with himself that God is propitious and merciful to him. Which one thing ought exceedingly to move all Christians both to love and embrace by all means that confession, in which, through absolution, the certainty of grace and remission of sins is conceived and confirmed. And in this private absolution the Priest hath power of absolving the person confessing from all sins, even those which are wont to be called 'reserved cases;' yet so that he who is privately absolved is nevertheless (if he be brought to justice) subject to public judgements for open crimes."

"To this are added other advantages of secret confession, one of which is, that unlearned and uninstructed men can nowhere be more advantageously [Cranmer substituted "more advantageously" (*commodius*) for "more rightly" (*rectius*)] instructed as to Christian doctrine than in confession. [Cranmer inserts, "so that they obtain a learned and pious confessor."] For since in confession they bring attentive and teachable minds, they attend diligently to the things said by the Priest. Wherefore their faith can be ascertained, and they can be taught and informed by learned and pious pastors or confessors [Cranmer adds, 'out of the Word of God'] what sin is, how horrible a thing it is, and what are the differences of different sins, and how grievously God is angered against sins. For many, because they are ignorant of these things, are grievously disquieted in their consciences, trembling with fear 'there where no fear is;' who (as the Saviour saith,) 'strain out a gnat and swallow a camel,' being exceedingly anxious about the least and lightest sins and not propor-

tionably penitent for the greatest and heaviest. There are some also who, labouring under the like ignorance, almost despair of pardon for their sins, on account of immoderate fear and pusillanimity of mind. Others, on the contrary, in a proud hypocrisy, set themselves up against God, as if they were either without sin or God would not punish them for their sins."

"Now who knows not how useful and necessary [Cranmer proposed 'advantageous' (commoda) for 'necessary' (necessaria)] confession is to people of this sort, of which the one class are to be sternly rebuked and reprov'd out of the Word of God, that they may acknowledge themselves to be sinners, and understand how horribly God punishes sins? On the other hand, that most sweet consolation of the Gospel is to be brought to those who despair out of too exceeding fear. Moreover in confession men may be taught [Cranmer adds 'out of the Word of God'] not only in what way they may overcome the temptations of the devil and mortify the flesh, in order that they may not relapse into the former defilements of their life, but also by what remedies they may flee from all sins, that they should not reign over them. Besides, that humility of mind, whereby, for God's sake, man submits himself to man, and lays open the secrets of his breast, is the guardian and preserver of many virtues. Moreover that modesty and shamefacedness at sin which ariseth from confession, not only indicates a mind truly converted to God, but also draws back and withholds many men from foul deeds. Lastly, as he who confesseth his sins to the minister of the Church simply and as before God, declares that he has true fear of God, so through this humility of mind he learns more, both to fear and reverence God, and to repress the pride innate in the heart, so that he more

readily follows and obeys the Will of God. These things then being so, we in no wise doubt that all good men will judge, that this confession should not only be retained in the Church, but also be held in great price, seeing that it is on so many accounts useful and necessary [Cranmer wished to alter 'necessary' (necessariam) into 'advantageous' (commodam) and to add, 'although it be not enjoined in Scripture, yet on the aforesaid grounds' (licet non sit præcepta in scripturis, tamen prædictis de causis)]. But if there are any who either [Cranmer suggested the insertion of "rashly" (temere)] condemn or reject it, these shew that they neglect and despise both instruction in the Word of God, and the benefit of Absolution (which is given in Confession), and other many and great benefits which are exceedingly useful to Christians, and they do not perceive, that they bring into the Christian world very great licence of sinning, and give great occasion of rushing into every guilt."

"But as relates to the enumeration of sins, as we do not approve of a scrupulous and anxious enumeration, lest it should cast a snare over the consciences of men, so we judge that a sluggish and supine enumeration in a thing so sanitary is exceedingly perilous and to be avoided." [In the draught corrected by Cranmer the following addition appears in the margin in his handwriting, "so that he whose conscience is afflicted for one or many sins ought to seek from the priest, consolation counsel and absolution for each in particular, and not to neglect a thing so salutary." [ut cujus conscientia de peccato uno aut pluribus affligitur, is consolationem, consilium, et absolutionem singulatim a sacerdote petere, et rem tam salutarem non negligere debeat).]

Cranmer expresses his own belief in the Catechism which he published and which, he says, "I wrot." "b God dothe not speake to us with a voyce soundyng out of heaven. But He hath given the kayes of the kingdom of heaven, and the authoritie to forgyve synne, to the ministers of the Church. Wherefore let him that is a sinner go to one of them, let him knowlege and confesse his synne, and praye him that, according to God's commandemente, he will gyve him absolution, and comforte him with the word of grace and forgiveness of his synnes. And when the minister dothe so, then I ought stedfastly to believe that my synnes are truly forgiven me in heaven."

As to the alleged discrepancy with the teaching of the Reformers, (although we are not bound to any of their belief save as it is embodied in our formularies) it was, I suppose, on account of their eminence, that, in a party demonstration, three images were set up in the Cross called the "Martyrs' Memorial," erected here to their honour. The three selected were Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer. I have already given the opinion of Cranmer. Bishop Latimer says, "But to speak of right and true Confession, *I would to God it were kept in England*; for it is a good thing. And those which find themselves grieved in conscience might go to a learned man and there fetch of him comfort of the Word of God, and so come to a quiet conscience *And sure it grieveth me much that such confessions are not kept in England, &c.*"

Bishop Ridley says, "You have known me long indeed :

^b Cranmer's Catechism, p. 202.

* Sermon on the 3^d Sunday after Epiphany, Vol. ii. p. 852.

in the which time it has chanced me, as you say, to mislike some things. It is true, I grant: for sudden changes without substantial and necessary cause, and the heady setting forth of extremities, I did never love. *Confession unto the minister*, which is able to instruct, correct, comfort, and inform the weak, wounded, and ignorant conscience, indeed I ever thought might do much good to Christ's congregation, and so, I assure you, I think even at this day^d."

In regard to the practical teaching of the Church of England, I may set down as a document of secondary authority, i. e. to whose words we are not bound, the Second book of Homilies. Yet we are bound to declare, in general terms, that "it doth contain a godly and wholesome doctrine." The Homily, when laying down that, according to the *exact signification of a Sacrament*, Absolution is not such, as having no visible sign commanded in the New Testament, yet declares unhesitatingly, "Absolution hath the promise of forgiveness of sins." "' For although absolution hath the promise of forgiveness of sin, yet by the express word of the New Testament, it hath not the promise annexed and tied to the visible sign, which is imposition of hands. For this visible sign (I mean, laying on of hands) is not expressly commanded in the New Testament to be used in absolution, as the visible signs in Baptism and the Lord's Supper are: and therefore absolution is *no such* sacrament as baptism and the communion are." Even the Second Book of Homilies, though

^d Letter to one Master West, sometime his chaplain; from Fox. See Eccles. Biog. Vol. iii. p. 67. quoted by Wordsworth App. n. 9. p. 71.

* Art. xxxv.

' Homily on common prayer and sacraments.

differing somewhat in tone from the first, after speaking against the auricular confession of the Church of Rome, makes reservation for our own freedom to use it.

“^sI do not say but that, if any do find themselves troubled in conscience, they may repair to their learned curate or pastor, or to some other godly learned man, and shew the trouble and doubt of their conscience to them, that they may receive at their hand the comfortable salve of God’s word; but it is against the true Christian liberty that any man should be bound to the numbering of his sins.”

In “^hthe Injunctions given by Edward vith,” it is assumed that the people will come to confess in Lent, and occasion is taken to give further instruction in the faith, (a knowledge of the faith being required every where as a condition of absolution.)

“They shall in confessions every Lent examine every person that cometh to confession to them, whether they can recite the articles of their faith, the Pater noster, and the Ten Commandments in English, and hear them say the same particularly.”

Abp. Parker, as one of the first acts of his office, had to enquire, whether any denied any of the Articles of the Creed, or that mortal sin was remissible by penance.

VI. “ⁱ*Item.* You shall enquire of the doctrine and judgement of all and singular head and members of your Church: . . . whether any of them do either privily or openly preach or teach any unwholesome erroneous seditious doctrine, . . . or in any other point do persuade or

. ^s Second part of the Homily on repentance. Homilies Part. ii. 2.

^h No 9. Cardwell, Documentary Annals T. i. p. 10.

ⁱ Strype’s Life of Parker, App. N. liii p. 87. ed. 1711.

move any not to conform themselves to the order of religion, reformed restored and received by public authority in the Church of England. As for example . . . that every article in our creed, commonly received and used in the Church, is not to be received of necessity; or that mortal or voluntary sins, committed after baptism, be not remissible by penance, &c. [not "*upon* repentance, but" *by* [the ordinance of] penance.]

Archbishop Parker and the other Bishops also drew up "Interpretations and further Considerations" of the "Injunctions for the better direction of the clergy."

Among "the articles of the principal heads of religion, prescribed to ministers," it is said; "¹The Church of Christ is, wherein the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's ordinance; and in which the power of the keys is retained."

In a declaration of certain principal articles of religion put forth by Archbp. Parker and the rest of the bishops,

No. iii. begins "¹I do acknowledge also the Church to be the spouse of Christ, wherein the word of God is truly taught, the sacraments orderly ministered according to Christ's institution, and the authority of the keys duly used."

The Canons of 1603 teach but incidentally on the subject of confession; but the evidence of the use of private confession at that time is the stronger, because it *is* incidental. The Canon does not regulate any thing about confession. Its subject is discipline. It provides, that if, for fear of man or negligence, the Churchwardens or

¹ in Cardw. Doc. Ann. N. liii. T. i. pp. 236—240.

¹ Ib. pp. 263, 264.

others would not present to the Bishop "such enormities as are apparent in the Parish," the Clergy of the Parish might do so. But an exception is made of any crime known through confession. "¹Provided always, That if any man confess his secret and hidden sins to the Minister, for the unburdening of his conscience, and to receive spiritual consolation and ease of mind from him; we do not any way bind the said Minister by this our Constitution, but do straitly charge and admonish him, that he do not at any time reveal and make known to any person whatsoever any crime or offence so committed to his trust and secrecy (except they be such crimes as by the laws of this realm his own life may be called into question for concealing the same,) under pain of irregularity."

"The pain of irregularity" (Heylyn says^m), "as the Canonists tell us, not only doth deprive a man of all his spiritual promotions for the present time, but makes him utterly incapable of any for the time to come, and therefore is the greatest penalty, except degradation from his priesthood, which possibly a Clergyman can be subject to.—In which we see the Church allows of one key only to unlock Confession, and that the Gallican Church doth allow of also. For in the Re-admission of the Jesuits into the University of Paris it was especially conditioned and provided for, amongst other things, ⁿ*That if they heard of any attempt or conspiracy against the King or his Realm or any manner of treason in confession, they* (and all other Clergymen on the like occasions) *should reveal the same unto the Magistrate.*"

¹ Can. 113.

^m Theol. Veterum Art. x. P. ii. v. 6. "The forgiveness of sins." p. 486.

ⁿ Contin. of the Fr. hist. p. 36.

Such an exception evinces the more, that confession was an existing practice of the time. It would not have been made in the 18th century, when confession was rare. Canons are made with reference to existing practice. Had it not been at that time notorious, that confession was made to the parish priest, and that widely, such a provision would have been obviously absurd, and an occasion of ridicule. The Canon, however, was the basis of Episcopal Visitation Articles, a few years afterwards.

It is difficult to throw ourselves back into the force of documents of a past age; but we may try to picture it. I know not, whether Visitation Articles are much in use now. However, whenever they are used, they would, if directed to the Churchwardens, come into the hands of every Churchwarden of a diocese. We can imagine an enquiry of the Churchwardens; Whether the Clergyman kept his legal residence, or whether he administered Holy Communion so as to enable all the parishioners to receive the "three times a year" enjoined upon all by the Prayer-book? We know in fact that, through official enquiries, the Bishops do know, how frequent the administration of Holy Communion is in every parish in their diocese. In former days it might have been asked, whether Clergymen wore even a Surplice "in all times of their ministration," or whether there were public Baptisms or Catechisings of children. But what if ten Bishops were to enquire—

1) as to the persons excommunicated and of their obtaining their Absolution.

2) whether the Minister exhorteth those troubled or disquieted to open their grief, that they may by the Minister receive the benefit of Absolution.

3) whether the Minister have revealed any crimes or

offences, so committed to his trust and secrecy, contrary to the 113th Canon?

It would require a vivid imagination to conceive, how this fact would be received. The Bishops would of course be denounced as conspiring against the Reformation, and endeavouring to "introduce into the Church of England the teaching and practice of auricular confession, contrary to the teaching of the Word of God, alien to the doctrine principles and order of the Church, fraught with peril to its existence as an establishment, and subversive of the principles of morality, social order, and civil and religious liberty °."

Yet such were Visitation Articles of a succession of Bishops from 1619—1679, founded on the Canon of 1603. And these Visitation Articles were issued by Bishops, who have been held in reverence ever since for their learning and piety, such as Bishop Andrewes^p, 1629. They were issued also by Overall^q, Bp. of Norwich, 1619; and Mon-

° A petition to H. M. Queen Victoria circulated by the Council of the Church Association, to suppress Confession, which all members of the Church of England "both male and female" are requested to sign.

^p Bishop Andrewes omits the words "by the ministry of God's holy Word" and "together with ghostly counsel and advice."

^q Bp. Montague quotes him as "that right learned and reverend bishop of Norwich, Dr. Overal, of late: a man for admirable learning, and yet of strange humility, in communicating his knowledge unto any poor scholar, hardly equalled, sure outgone by none since the world had him. The 21st Article enquired of in his visitation 1619, concerning ministers, is: 'Whether doth your minister, before the several times of the administration of the Lord's supper, admonish and exhort his parishioners, if they have their conscience troubled and disquieted, to resort unto him or some other learned Minister, and open his grief, that he may receive such ghostly counsel and comfort, as his conscience may be relieved, and by the minister he may receive the benefit of absolution, to the quiet of his conscience and avoiding of scruple. And if any man confess his secret and hidden sins, be he sick or whole, to the minister, for the unburthening of his conscience, and receiving such

tagne, Bp. of Norwich, 1638; by two bishops of Peterborough in succession, Lindsell^r 1633, and Dee^a 1636; by Duppa Bp. of Chichester^t 1638; by Juxon^u, Bp. of London, 1640; and having been interrupted by the oppression of the Church during the Great Rebellion, (when even the prayers could not be said except in secret) were resumed by Wren^a Bp. of Norwich 1662; Fuller^r Bp. of Lincoln 1668; Gunning^a Bp. of Ely 1679. The like Articles were put forth by Kent^a Archdeacon of Sudbury about 1631, and by Pory Archdeacon of ^bMiddlesex 1662. Of course, these Bishops wished to revive or secure or guard the use of confession in every parish of their dioceses. Will people be prepared to say that they were, one and all, guilty of the enormities which the recent petition imputes to those who, they say, wish to introduce it?

Much has been said of late about obedience to Bishops, even when they would not put forth their own fatherly authority, but required obedience to the decisions of a Court, one of which has been since reversed. But what

spiritual consolation, doth or hath the said minister at any time, revealed and made known to any person whomsoever, any crime or offence so committed to his trust, contrary to the 113th Canon?" The Gagge &c. p. 83.

^r 2nd Report of the Commissioners on rubrics 1868 p. 540. Some of these were quoted in Maskell's Doctrine of Absolution, p. 137. and in my "The Church of England leaves her children free to whom to open their griefs" pp. 115—117. Contemporary copies of the Articles are in the Bodleian. See Catalogue, Articles.

^a quoted in Maskell Doctrine of Absolution p. 137. "Doth your minister commonly premonish his parishioners, if they be troubled in conscience, to confess and open their griefs to him, that they may receive the benefit of Absolution?" Maskell adds, "almost in the same words within the Diocese of Norwich. 1636."

^r 2nd Report p. 577.

^a Ib. p. 591.

^a Ib. p. 560.

^r Ib. p. 634.

^a Ib. p. 648.

^a Ib. p. 525.

^b Ib. p. 627.

would be said, if any of these Bishops were to ask the Churchwardens; “^c if any person sick or in health (especially before receiving the Holy Communion) [accordingly not *only* in sickness nor before Holy Communion] finding his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, doth for the quieting thereof and for further comfort and counsel, unburthen his conscience to his Priest or Minister, then doth the said Priest or Minister upon special confession of his sins made, together with fruits meet for repentance having been performed, (to both which he is also by the minister to be invited,) upon his repentance administer to him Absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice? and have you heard that the said Priest or Minister hath revealed or made known at any time to any person whatsoever, directly or indirectly, any crime or offence confessed to him by any such penitents?”

“^d Doth the Minister exhort his parishioners to make confession of their sins to himself or to some other learned grave and discreet Minister; especially in Lent, against the holy time of Easter, that they may receive comfort and Absolution, and so become worthy receivers of such sacred mysteries?”

The 19th Canon of the Irish Church, 1634, goes yet further, requiring that the Minister should give public notice of his readiness to receive confessions before Holy Communion. “^e And the minister of every parish, and in Cathedral and Collegiate Churches some principal minister of the Church, shall, the afternoon before the said ad-

^c Visitation Articles of Bp. Gunning.

^d Articles of Bp. Montague.

^e Constitutions and Canons of the synod of Dublin, 1634. Canon xix. “Warning to be given beforehand for the Communion.” Wilkins Conc. iv. 501.

ministration, give warning by the tolling of the bell or otherwise, to the intent that, if any have any scruple of conscience or desire the special ministry of reconciliation, he may afford it to those that need it. And to this end the people are often to be exhorted to enter into a special examination of the state of their own souls; and that, finding themselves either extreme dull or much troubled in mind, they do resort unto God's ministers, to receive from them, as well advice and counsel for the quickening of their dead hearts and the subduing of those corruptions whereunto they have been subject, as the benefit of absolution likewise for the quieting of their conscience, by the power of the keys, which Christ hath committed to His ministers for that purpose."

With regard to the writers of the Elizabethan period the less perhaps may be said in them about "private confession," because the great object, at that time, was to restore public confession¹. The attempt failed, through the opposition of the laity. The last expression of the mind of the Church thereon is in the Preface to the Communion service.

Two things, however, have been confused by those who contrast the public penance of the early Church and the private confession in the later Church. They have overlooked that those subjected to the public penance, were in part only "such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin." In their case there was plainly no "confession" at all. Their sin, in whatever way, was "notorious," and those

¹ Bp. C. Wordsworth in the App. to the sermon on Evangelical repentance puts together notices of these attempts up to A.D. 1580 under the head "Desiderata, what our Church has wished to do." App. pp. 41—68.

xlvi *Public penance involved private confession.*

who were convicted thereof, were (like the incestuous Corinthian) separated from the Body of Christ.

But there was another class, outwardly joined with these, —those who, having been guilty of the same sins, but whose sins were hid from all eyes save the all-seeing Eye of God, driven by their own consciences, confessed them and were subjected to the same course of penitence. Plainly it would have been inconsistent that one set of persons, who happened to be detected, should be subjected to a severe course of public penance, and another set, guilty of the self-same sins, should be free from that penance, and go on, as innocent persons, simply because they had not been detected. Anyhow, their consciences would not allow of it. But, although they subjected themselves to the same course of penitence, the actual sins, for which they were so subjected, remained concealed, except from the individual priest whose advice they had taken, whether they should so subject themselves. The public acknowledgment of such sins as would make any one amenable to the laws, might have cost the persons confessing, their life. Those then who voluntarily confessed, confessed the specific sin to a priest whom they themselves selected, and he decided whether the case was one for the course of public penance[‡].

‘Public penance’ did not then necessarily involve the public confession of the special sin, for which the sinner was subjected to it.

Origen (if the Latin accurately represents the original,

[‡] “Our fathers did not command to publish the guilt of women, who had been adulteresses, and who out of godly fear confessed, or were any how convicted, lest we should give occasion of death to them, being convicted; but commanded that they should be placed without communion, until the time of penitence was fulfilled.” (S. Basil Ep. 199 (Can. 2.) T. iii. p. 295.)

it cannot anyhow be far wrong) exhorts at once to private confession and public penitence.

“^b See what Divine Scripture teacheth us, that we must not hide sin within. For they too who are oppressed by undigested food or phlegm, if they reject it, are relieved : so they who have sinned, if they conceal and retain the sin within them, are oppressed within and almost suffocated by the phlegm or humour of sin ; but if he become his own accuser, while he accuses himself and confesses, he at the same time both ejecteth the sin, and digesteth the whole cause of the disease. Only look diligently to whom thou oughtest to confess thy sin ; prove first the physician, to whom thou shouldest set forth the causes of thy sickness, who knoweth how to be weak with the weak, to weep with the weeping, who is trained in sympathy and compassionating, that so thou mayest do and follow whatever counsel he may give, who shall first shew himself a skilful and compassionate physician ; if he perceive that thy sickness is such as ought to be published in the congregation of the whole Church, that so others may be edified thereby, and thyself readily cured, this must be prescribed with much deliberation, and on the very experienced advice of such a Physician.”

S. Leo strictly prohibits the publication of the sins privately confessed, upon which some Italian Bishops¹ had ventured, as a presumption against the “*Apostolic rule*” which, he says, “I have *lately* learnt to be committed by *some* by a lawless usurpation.”

“^c For it suffices that the guilt of the conscience be laid

^a Auct. Hom. 2. in Ps. 37, 6. Latin. in Orig. Opp. ii. 688. de la Rue.

¹ Bishops in Campania, Samnium and Picenum.

^c Ep. 168. (al. 136.) ad Episc. Camp. &c. 1, 2.

open to the priests alone in secret confession. For although that fulness of faith, which out of the fear of God fears not to take shame before men, seems to be praiseworthy, yet because the sins of all are not of such sort, that they who ask to do penitence, fear not their being published, let so unadvisable a custom be done away, lest many be kept from the remedies of penitence; either being ashamed, or fearing that actions, for which they may be punished by the laws, should be discovered to their enemies. For that confession suffices, which is made first to God, then to the priest also, who draweth near to pray for the sins of the penitents. For so at length may more be stirred up to penitence, if the sins confessed by the penitents (*pœnitentia confitentis*) be not published in the ears of the people."

S. Ambrose followed the same rule. Paulinus says in his life, "He was one who rejoiced with those who rejoiced, and wept with those who wept. For as often as any confessed to him his faults, in order to receive penance, he so wept as to compel him too to weep; for he seemed himself to lie prostrate with him who was prostrate. But the matter of the crimes, which he [the penitent] confessed to him, he spake of to no one, except to the Lord Himself, with Whom he interceded, leaving a good example to succeeding Bishops, that they should rather be intercessors with God, than accusers among men."

In the Eastern Churches, the Bishops seem to have made over this office to Public Penitentiaries. For, when on occasion of a terrible scandal at Constantinople, the office was abolished formally by Nectarius, the Patriarch,

* Vita S. Ambros. à Paulino &c n. 39. App. Opp. S. Ambr. T. ii. p. x. Ben.

A.D. 381—397, “almost all the Bishops everywhere [i. e. in the East] followed him” [i. e. in abolishing their own]. They had them then previously. But to these Penitentiaries sinners confessed privately. “¹It seemed naturally, from the first, to the Bishops a burdensome thing, that they [the penitents] should confess their sins as in a theatre, having the people as witnesses; they appointed then a presbyter, of excellent life, taciturn and prudent, for this office. To him sinners came and confessed their past lives; but he, according to the sin of each, having put on each the penance, which he ought to perform or undergo, absolved them, when they had fulfilled the penance on themselves. The Novatians, who make no account of penitence, had no need of this. But in the other heresies this prevails till now.”

The act of Nectarius, and the others who followed him, abolished public confession in the Greek Church. For there was no one entitled to assign it. One Eudæmon advised Nectarius to “^mtake away the presbyter over penitence, and to allow that each should, according to his own conscience, partake of the mysteries; for that thus only would the Church be without rebuke.” Private confession remained as before; only, it was, as with us, left to the conscience of each. Socrates, who accounted the abolition injurious to the Church, thought the evil to consist in this, “^mI see that it has given a plea, not to reprove the sins of each other, nor to keep the Apostle’s command, ‘Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.’” Discipline was begun to be relaxed, before this change was made. “¹Antiquity and the gravity and the carefulness thereto belonging had gradually

¹ Soz. vii. 16.

^m Socr. v. 19.

1 *Side-attack by writer in Quarterly Review, as if the*

begun to slip through to an indifferent and negligent way of life. For before, I think, sins were lesser, both through the shame of those who told their offences, and through the carefulness of those appointed to this office."

The difference of the ancient and modern confession does not consist in the confession being public or private, (for that of old was private, before it was public), but that the sins, then confessed, were for the most part", those great deadly sins which bring death to the soul in one act; in the later Church, not of necessity but as expedient, lesser sins have been ordinarily confessed also.

In the Roman Communion, since the "Omnis utriusque sexus" of the ivth Lateran Council A. D. 1215, confession, once in the year, has been required of all its members, under pain of excommunication in life, and unhallowed burial after death.

But before going further, it may be well to remove a confusion, to which I myself seem to have given occasion by some words of mine, that "so long as those words of our Lord, 'Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven,' are repeated over us when ordained, so long will there be confession in the Church of England." I certainly wrote those words in the full conviction, that any removal of those words was impossible. It did not even occur to me to think of the position of things, if (*per impossibile*) they should be removed.

The writer, who quotes my words, evidently thinks that, if those words could be removed, the practice of confession,

* S. Basil's monks confessed lesser infirmities, for edification. S. Basil *Sermo ascet.* T. ii. p. 323. Ben. Reg. fus. tract. q. 26. T. ii. p. 373.

° Letter to The Times. Nov. 29th 1866.

use of confession depended upon words in our Ordinal. li

which he hates, would cease also. In a laboured article, he tries to prepare for the removal of those words, as one of "two things in the book of Common Prayer which vex the Church of England." [I certainly had not heard, that any one in the Church of *England* had been vexed by them; nor can I imagine how any one, whom they could "vex," should have presented himself as a candidate for the Office of the Priesthood, when, in the solemn act of conferring those orders upon him, they would be recited over him. What does "vex" minds in "the Church of England" is not those words in the Ordinal, but the intolerance of those, who will not allow their neighbours to confess in peace, because they do not wish to confess themselves. But the use of the words in the Ordinal has nothing to do with confession. Priests confess to each other, or laity whose hearts God has touched confess to the Priest, not on account of any words in the Ordinal, but because they *are* Priests, and to Priests our Lord has committed this ministry.] However in preparation for this removal which he wishes for, the writer (whether he himself is concerned with it or no, or is only throwing a firebrand among us) insists that, although our Lord's words, 'Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them &c.' occur in a Bangor Pontifical A.D. 1270, they do not occur as part of the act of ordination in any Ordinal but our own¹. In the Exeter Pontifical in Bp. Lacy's time the persons ordained are called 'ordinati,' after the words had been said to them, 'Receive power to offer

¹ Quarterly Review No. 288. Oct. 1877. p. 539.

² Ib. p. 552.

³ Accipe potestatem offerre sacrificium Deo, missasque celebrare tam pro vivis quam pro defunctis, in Nomine Domini. Lib. Pontif. of E. Lacy, Bp. of Exeter, printed from a MS. of the xivth century, in the Library of the Dean and Chapter, by R. Barnes Esq. A. D. 1847. p. 90.

lii *Use of our Lord's words, Whose sins &c. very old in*

sacrifice to God, and to celebrate masses both for quick and dead,' and the words quoted in our Ordinal, 'Receive the Holy Ghost; Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose sins ye do retain they are retained,' are used subsequently, in the course of the same office. Of course, it is no essential change, that the words by which our Lord bestowed the power of remitting sins on the Apostles as a body, should, when addressed to each individual ordained, stand in the singular. It is but the individualising of our Lord's words to each who is ordained Priest, conveying to *him* that authority, which our Lord gave in common to all, and to each in his order and grace.

The pronouncing of the solemn words at a later stage, yet in the course of the service, is obviously no precedent for omitting them altogether and leaving the service for the Ordination of priests without any indication of any office whatever conferred on the priest, or marking whether the priest in any way differs from the deacon. Those who urge this are generally too busy with their objections, to look far beyond. As usual, they content themselves with negations. They hint at the omission of the words without troubling themselves how they are to be replaced. They do not even except against the words used, since the words *do* specify an office, which our Lord gave to the Apostles and to the Church in them, and the Church has ever believed that the office was conferred on the Priest as well as the Bishop. They only allege, that they are not *necessary*. We could not say that the words in our Ordinal are *necessary*, because, in the Ordination of priests they were at one time not used

* Accipe Spiritum sanctum: quorum remisieritis peccata, remittuntur eis, et quorum retinueris [sic], retenta erunt. Ib. p. 91.

in Ordinals of unquestioned authority. But in the Consecration of Bishops, the use of the words is of very high antiquity^t, and they refer not to Church censures, but to the forgiveness of sins. But the power of pronouncing God's forgiveness, "by His authority committed to" us, is the same in the Priest as in the Bishop. The Bishop may restrain the use of it; but, unless restrained, the power which he confers on us, is the same as his own.

But the power, contained in those words, does not depend upon the words being addressed to the priests, so long as

^t The *substance* of the Apostolic Constitutions is very old, far older than the clumsy setting, in which they have been ascribed to Apostles. [See Dr. Pusey's remarks upon them in the *Doctrine of the Real Presence* pp. 605—609.] The chapter on the prayer for the consecration of a Bishop runs, 'Grant unto him, Almighty Lord, through Thy Christ, the participation of the Holy Spirit, so that he should have power to remit sins according to Thy commandment, to give Clergy according to Thy injunction, and to loose every bond according to the power which Thou gavest to the Apostles,' (Const. Ap. viii. 5.) where the remission of sins and the loosing every bond are marked as distinct offices. Mr. Churton quotes from Denzinger, *Ritus Orient.* ii. 6. "in the rites of the *Alexandrian Jacobites*, in the consecration of a Patriarch or Archbishop, the prayer, 'Give him the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that he may loose all the bonds of those whom the enemy has bound in sin, and grant that he may reconcile separated members to the unity of the Church.' The like prayer occurs in the rites of the *Syrian Jacobites*, 'that the newly ordained Bishop may obtain entire remission of guilt sins and faults for the whole spiritual and sacerdotal flock committed to him,' and, as distinct offices, 'that he may bind and loose, expel and separate.'" (Ib. p. 97.) In the rite of the *Maronites* for the ordination of a Bishop we also find the prayer, 'Give unto him the joy of Thy Holy Spirit, that he may have the power of remitting sins according to Thy word, and may loosen bonds according to the power which Thou gavest to Thine Apostles. (Ib. p. 199). "Again in the *Nestorian rites* we have the antiphon, 'I give unto thee the keys of the spiritual treasure, that thou mayest bind and loose whatsoever is in heaven and earth.'" "The prayer in the Latin rites for consecrating a Bishop is not more precise. 'Let whatsoever he binds on earth be bound in heaven and whatsoever he shall loose on earth be loosed in heaven: whosoever sins he retains, do Thou retain them; and whosoever sins he remits, do Thou remit them.'" Defence of the English Ordinal. pp. 58-61.

liv *Our Lord's words in the Gospel confer the gift on us.*

there are any priests at all. They are our Lord's words to the Apostles, and in them to their successors, which confer the power ; the power does not depend on any use of them in the Ordination of priests. The Greek priests have the same power, or any others ordained by any other ritual, so that they are validly ordained. The omission of the words which, this writer avows, "are retained with the utmost propriety by the Presbyterian Church in ordaining her

But since the office of the Bishop and the Priest is so far one, he says, "we find in the rites of the *Armenians* at the ceremony of investing the Presbyter with the girdle, the form 'Receive from the Holy Ghost the power of binding and loosing, which our Lord Jesus Christ gave to the holy Apostles. Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' (Denzinger Ritus Orient. ii. 313.)" The words are also used in a precatory form, "Give him grace, as Thou gavest to the holy Apostles, that whatsoever he shall bind on earth &c" (Ibid. p. 316.) The rites of the *Syrian Jacobites* (Ibid. p. 101.) contain a charge addressed by the Bishop to those about to be ordained Priests. "He who receives a great power committed to him is bound to great purity. Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Such a ministry is not committed to the celestial powers, because they are "ministering spirits." That which is committed to you is the Priesthood, which, though exercised on earth, has its rank and power over the body of Christ and the souls of Christians. The judges of this world have power to bind, but they can only bind the bodies of men ; but the bonds of priests bind their souls and extend even to heaven : for whatsoever they bind here below, God confirms above. For He said, 'Whose sins ye remit, they shall be remitted.' In the rites of the *Maronites* (Ibid ii. p. 143) we find a prayer for the new Presbyter, which recognizes this power, "Grant that he may be a vigilant and diligent steward, to whom the keys of heaven are by Thee committed, that he may open the doors of repentance to those who shall be converted unto Thee ; a steward, who carries the mysteries of the Priesthood of the Lord's treasures, who, at Thy command, may bind the guilty, and by Thy authority may loose the penitents who shall come to true repentance." (Ibid. p. 12.) In the rites of the *Jacobite Alexandrian* (Ibid. p.14.) Church, there is a similar prayer, that the Presbyter may "fulfil the functions of the Priesthood to those of the people who shall, as they ought, confess their misery to him, and this is followed by a spiritual charge and admonition on the subject of hearing confessions." Churton l. c. pp. 61-63.

presbyters, because it holds that they are really Bishops," would shake people's minds through and through, as implying an heretical bias, if not a formal rejection of the truth contained in them. No one would imagine that this hint at their removal proceeds from a mere love of antiquity. Our English Ordinal stood in the way of the Irish innovations. The arguments which were supposed to lie against the Absolution in the Service for the Visitation of the sick, which the Irish (so-termed) 'Synod' has abolished, were just as effective or worthless, as the case may be, when applied to the Ordinal. But it is understood that, in approaching the Ordinal, the innovaters were arrested by the reflection, that a change in the form of Ordination might raise legal questions which would imperil the chance of young men ordained in Ireland, and having hopes of obtaining English preferment. The words were accordingly retained; although, it seems, they do "vex" some of those who profess to accept them. The words *do* express faith, and that, relating to an article of the Apostles' Creed, "the Forgiveness of sins." It may be difficult to say what degree of omission involves formal heresy. No one could doubt that a body, which, in the face of the experience of centuries, were to omit from the Nicene Creed the words, "of One Substance with the Father" would be heretical to the core, even though it inserted no formal words of heresy. A Socinian prayer-book has, ere now, been formed by omissions. To fail to confess our Lord before men is one form of denying Him, and "who-soever shall deny Me before men," our Lord says, "him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven."

The removal of the words would not obtain the advocates of their removal anything which they wish, unless it were

lvi Removal of our Lord's words wd not lessen confession.

what they seem to desire above all things, the removal of ourselves. It would occasion probably a lasting schism, or rend from the Church of England very many of her most attached members; but it would not in the least abate the use of confession among those who remained. Confession is part of the life-blood of the Church. Consciences are stirred; and unless the Church of England were to renounce the faith and formally deny our Blessed Lord's words, a penitent who has learned to believe them, would, by virtue of them, seek from the priest, whom our Lord commissioned, the exercise of the office entrusted to him. They would seek it of him, if not, as of old many did, elsewhere. Conscience is part of our engraced nature. Much more then will that be true, which the Roman poet said of unregenerate nature, 'Expel nature with a pitch-fork, yet it will always come back.' Well, if some would learn at least from Horace, if not from the Gospel, and desist in time from 'pitch-fork' measures!

However, my object here is to distinguish between different grounds for quoting our Lord's words in the following extracts: 1) in answer to Roman controversialists, in proof that our Church did retain the doctrine of confession and absolution; and this was proved by their use in our Ordinal. 2) As the ground of our Absolutions; and this depends on our Blessed Lord's words, as they lie in the Gospel, which are, any how, the Divine authority for Absolution. The use of His words in our Ordinal has been a continual reminder to us of the power, which we received at our Ordination for the benefit of His people. But we believe that we have this power, not because our Church incorporated them in our Ordination Service, but because our Lord spake them, and the Church has always from the beginning understood them to convey that power.

It would be wearisome to go through a mere list of names of individual writers who recognized confession, as belonging to the English Church. I will then place them as they did so, partly in controversy with Roman writers, partly in reference to our formularies as an existing system. I should have been glad to have divided them further, as the authors wrote as Theologians, or acted upon the minds of the people by Sermons, or by manuals of devotion; but I feared that this would introduce confusion, since the same Divines would come under different classes. I have thought it better then to place them in one class, although miscellaneous.

It is remarkable, that not a little vindication of confession among us was in defence against Roman controversialists. Our writers, *then*, in self-defence, had to allege that, although we left confession free to the conscience of each, we did not disuse or discountenance it. Our controversialists of that day had to claim for our Church, that it *retained*, that which the Puritan controversialists of this day declaim against us, as though we were *introducing* it. They of old *vindicated* as at least not alien from our Church, what Puritan writers now denounce as alien to its "doctrine, principles and order."

I will set down a few of them, premising that they come not from one section of the Church. Bp. Jewel, Bp. White, and Abp. Ussher speak distinctly as well as Bp. Overall, Bp. Morton, and Abp. Bramhall.

I. 1. BISHOP JEWEL says,

"Abuses and errors removed, specially the priest being learned, as we have said before, we mislike no manner of

* Defence of Apology ii. vi. 1. T. iv. p. 486. ed. Jelf.

confession, whether it be private or public. For as we think it not unlawful to make open confession before many, so we think it not unlawful (abuses always excepted) to make the like confession in private, either before a few, or before one alone." "xThe difference that is between us and our adversaries in the whole matter is not great: saving that it liketh Mr. Harding to busy himself with needless quarrels without cause. Three kinds of confession are expressed unto us in the Scriptures. The first made secretly unto God alone: the second openly before the whole congregation: the third privately unto our brother. Of the two former kinds there is no question. Touching the third, if it be discreetly used, to the greater comfort and better satisfaction of the penitent, without superstition or other ill, it is not in any wise by us reprov'd. The abuses and error set apart, we do no more mislike a 'private confession' than a 'private sermon.' Thus much only we say, that 'private confession' to be made unto the minister, is neither commanded by Christ, nor necessary to salvation."

2. BISHOP OVERALL asserts that the only difference between the Church of England and Rome in this respect, is that we do not hold "Sacramental Confession and Absolution" to and from a Priest to be "absolutely necessary" to the remission of sins.

"yThe Church of England, howsoever it holdeth not confession and absolution sacramental, that is made unto and received from a priest, to be so absolutely necessary,

x Def. of Apol. ii. vii. 2. p. 562.

y A Ms. note on the Absolution in the Office for the Visitation of the Sick, by Bishop Overall, written in an interleaved Common Prayer Book in Bishop Cosin's Library, printed in the year 1618, and taken from "Tracts of the Anglican Fathers."

as that without it there can be no remission of sins; yet by this place it is manifest, what she teacheth concerning the virtue and force of this sacred action. The confession is commanded to be special; the absolution is the same that the ancient Church and the present Church of Rome useth; what would they have more? . . . Our *if he feel his conscience troubled*, is no more than is *si inveniat peccata*: for if he be not troubled with sin, what needs either confession or absolution? Venial sins, that separate not from grace of God, need not so much trouble a man's conscience. If he hath committed any mortal sin, then we require confession of it to a priest, who may give him, upon his true contrition and repentance, the benefit of absolution; which takes effect according to his disposition that is absolved. . . . The truth is, that in the priest's absolution there is the true power and virtue of forgiveness, which will most certainly take effect, nisi ponitur obex, as in baptism."

3. ARCHBISHOP USSHER, of the Calvinistic school, so long commonly quoted as "the learned Ussher," in answer to "the Jesuit's challenge," "how can your religion be true, which disalloweth of many chief articles, which the Saints and Fathers of that primitive Church did generally hold to be true?" and as one of these, "that the Doctors Pastors and Fathers of that Church exhorted the people to confess their sins unto their ghostly Fathers," treats it as a calumny, which ought itself to be confessed, before the Jesuit was absolved;

"* We tell him again, that by the public order prescribed in our Church, before the administration of the Holy Com-

* Answer to a Jesuit p. 1.

* Ib. i. c. iv. Confession pp. 74, 75. ed. Cambr.

lx *Abp. Ussher ; calumnious to say we deny that priests*

munion, the minister likewise doth exhort the people, that if there be any of them, which cannot quiet his own conscience, but requireth further comfort or counsel, he should 'come to him, or some other discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open his griefs, that he may receive such ghostly counsel advice and comfort as his conscience may be relieved ; and that by the ministry of God's Word he may receive comfort and the benefit of absolution, to the quieting of his conscience and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.' Whereby it appeareth, that the exhorting of the people to confess their sins unto their ghostly fathers maketh no such wall of separation betwixt the ancient Doctors and us, but we may well, for all this, be of the same religion that they were of, and consequently that this doughty champion hath more will than skill to manage controversies, who could make no wiser choice of points of differences to be insisted upon. Be it therefore known unto him, that *no kind of Confession*, either public or private, is disallowed by us, that is in any way requisite for the due execution of that ancient power of the Keys which Christ bestowed upon His Church.

"^b From Confession we are now to proceed unto Absolution, which it were pity this man should receive, before he made confession of the open wrong he hath here done, in charging us to deny 'that priests have power to forgive sins.' Whereas the very formal words which our Church requireth to be used in the ordination of a minister, are these: 'Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven ; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.' And therefore, if this be all the matter, the Fathers and we shall agree well enough, however this make-bate would

^b Id. Ib. Of the priest's power to forgive sins. Ib. pp. 99, 100.

fain put friends together by the ears, where there is no occasion at all of quarrel. For we acknowledge most willingly, that the principal part of the priest's ministry is exercised in the matter of 'forgiveness of sins;' question only is of the manner, how this part of their function is executed by them, and of the bounds and limits thereof."

"^c To forgive sins, therefore, being thus proper to God only and to His Christ, His ministers must not be held to have this power communicated unto them, but in an improper sense, namely, because God forgiveth by them, and hath appointed them, both to apply those means by which He useth to forgive sins, and to give notice unto repentant sinners of that forgiveness. For 'who can forgive sins but God alone?' 'Yet doth He forgive by them also, unto whom He hath given power to forgive,' saith S. Ambrose and his followers."

4. DR CRAKANTHROP, once an esteemed controversialist in the Church of England, protests that private confession is the teaching of our Church, and declares the statement, that it had been "abrogated among us, to be an artifice and deceit."

"^d As to auricular confession being abrogated among us, thou dealest artfully and deceitfully. Private confession, whereby any disburdens into the bosom, or, if thou wilt, the ear of the Priest, the anguish of his mind for one or more sins committed; the absolution, moreover of such sinner, after an earnest and unfeigned repentance done by him, through the keys of the Church committed to all presbyters, our Church both teaches and approves."—"We

^c Ib. p. 108.

^d Defensio Eccles. Ang. contra Archiepisc. Spalat. cap. lxxx. § 6. p. 555. Ang. Cath.

lxii *Bp. White, value of confⁿ; Montague, we refuse it not, have not abolished private confession, nor private absolution."*

5. BISHOP WHITE vindicates its use as consonant to Holy Scripture and the practice of the Primitive Church.

"* The Protestants in their doctrine acknowledge, that private confession of sins made by penitent people to the pastors of their souls, and particular absolution, or special application of the promises of the Gospel to such as be penitent, are profitable helps of virtue, godliness, and spiritual comfort." "† The true ends of private confession are these, which follow. *First*, to inform, instruct, and counsel Christian people in their particular actions. *Secondly*, if they be delinquents, to reprove them, and make them understand the danger of their sin. *Thirdly*, to comfort those that are afflicted and truly penitent, and to assure them of remission of sins by the word of absolution. *Fourthly*, to prepare people to the worthy reception of the Holy Communion. And if private confession be referred and used to these ends, it is a work of godly discipline, consonant to Holy Scripture, and anciently practised by the primitive Church."

6. BISHOP MONTAGUE says that, under different circumstances, our Church urges, persuades, requires it.

"‡ It is confessed, that priests, and none but priests, have power to forgive sins: it is confessed, that private confession unto a priest is of very ancient practice in the Church, of excellent use and practice, being discreetly handled. We refuse it to none, if men require it, if need be to have it. We urge it and persuade it in extremes. We require it in case of perplexity, for the quieting of men

* Answer to Fisher, p. 186.

† Ib. p. 188.

‡ "A Gagge for the new Gospel?" p. 83.

disturbed, and their consciences. It hath been so acknowledged by your followers, that, in the visitation of the sick, it is required: . . . and likewise before receiving of the Lord's Supper."

7. DR. GEORGE HAKEWIL makes a distinction between judicial and declaratory absolution, in the way in which people accept or reject the same form of words, according to the *sense* which they attach to it. He denies it to be judicial, only because judgment ultimately belongs to Almighty God. As S. Cyprian says, "^h We do not anticipate the judgment of the Lord Who will come to judge, but that, if He find a sinner's penitence full and entire, He will then ratify what has been here determined by us."

"ⁱ We willingly acknowledge (with S. Paul) that to the ministers of the Gospel is committed the ministry of reconciliation, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to open and shut, as they see cause: and therefore in our Ordination hath our Church ordained the Bishop to use these words, *Receive the Holy Ghost: whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained*; and consequently if the power of absolution be given in these words, then is it given and received in the Church of England, and as for the people, they stand bound, as often as they meet in their solemn assemblies, to a public and general confession, howbeit they are indeed freed from the necessity of that which we call auricular, though not from the *possibility*, as you falsely pretend. For as we enforce none, if they come not, as knowing that force may work upon the body,

^h Ep. 55. ad Antonian. n. 15. p. 136. Oxf. Tr.

ⁱ Answer to a treatise written by Dr. Carier by way of letter to His Majestie &c. pp. 266, 267.

Ixiv Hakewil; Ch. of E. sometimes wills private confn.

but never upon the will; so we exclude none, if they come with a true penitent heart, or out of the scruple of conscience, either to seek counsel, being ignorant of the quality and quantity of their sin; or comfort against despair for sin known and acknowledged. In this case, the only imparting of a man's mind to a trusty friend, like the opening of a festered sore, cannot but bring content to a soul so anguished and perplexed; but much more, if the ulcer be disclosed to a skilful and faithful pastor of the soul, who is no less able than willing, as well to understand the nature of the disease, as by warrant of divine ordinance to apply the remedy. And sure I see not but, the minister standing in the place of God, as His ambassador, and pronouncing absolution, upon humble and hearty repentance, as from God, it should prove a marvellous great ease and settlement to a poor distracted and distressed conscience: in which regard our Church hath well ordained in one of the exhortations before the Communion, 'If any of the congregation be troubled with the burden of sin, so that he cannot quiet &c.;' and in the Visitation of the Sick, 'if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter,' he is willed to make a special confession, and the minister thereupon to absolve him 'in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;' which is an absolution only declaratory, conditional, and ministerial. But the Church of Rome, not content herewith, challengeth to herself herein a power judicial, which is in truth individually annexed to the person and office of Him Who is Judge both of quick and dead."

8. ARCHDEACON MASON was an early and well-known defender of English orders against Roman controversialists. The title of his work gives a list of fifteen Roman contro-

versialists whom he was answering. In the chapter "on the Power of absolving," he explains in what sense absolution by the Priest may be said to be "judicial," and affirms that we use private absolution, whenever the case requires it.

"^k Since sin alone severs God and man, the remission of sins is nothing else than the reconciliation of God and man, which in Holy Scripture is ascribed both to God and the ministers of God, but in different ways, as the Apostle says; *All things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, because God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* God then reconciles us as Lord, by His own authority; the minister as ambassador, by vicarious authority: God, by not imputing sins, the minister by ministering.

"^l When Christ said, *Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted*, He conferred on His ministers the power of remitting sins;—but whose? Certainly of those only, who repent and believe.—Sin is committed against God, and so is remitted by God only. Wherefore when the minister remits sins to him who believeth, this remission is nothing else than a declaration, whereby he shews that God hath forgiven.

"^m Nor have we only public Absolution in our Churches, but also private. For there are some who want a singular

^k Vindiciæ Eccl. Angl. v. 10. 5. Not having Lindsay's translation of Mason's Latin enlargement of his work, which was originally in English, I have translated it. ^l Ib. n. 8. ^m Ib. n. 9.

consolation, and accordingly we use private absolution in the visitation of the sick, and as often as the broken spirits and wounded consciences of individuals require this. For after the sick man has made a profession of faith and charity, if he feels his conscience weighed down in anything, he unloads it privately into the bosom of the minister, and when he has made the confession, the minister uses this form of absolution (the form in the Visitation of the Sick).

“Thus we uplift tender consciences, struggling with the weight of sin and despair, by the hope of pardon through the promises of the Gospel, and when they repent and believe, we pronounce that their sins are forgiven.”

And in answer to the question, “^a Is this Absolution declaratory only, and not also judicial?” he says, “It is judicial also. The Apology of the Eng. Church (Jewel) acknowledges that the Priest is a judge. But judgement is required not only of discretion, but also of authority and power, which the Lord has vouchsafed to confer on His ministers.”

He supposed himself to be again asked,

“In judgement two things concur, the cognizance of the cause and the pronouncing of the sentence. Are these found with you?” He answers,

“Certainly: for the persons to be absolved openly profess their faith and repentance: this is the cognizance of the cause; then the Minister declares and seals to him the forgiveness of his sins: this is the pronouncing of the sentence.”

He supposes it again objected to him, “If the minister absolves as a judge, then he does it *properly*; not therefore by *declaring* it: for declaration is of a herald, not of a

^a Vindiciæ, n. 10.

judge." He answers, "Judges are of two sorts, superior and inferior: the superior judge, i. e. the king, can, properly and by his own royal authority, remit offences against his own laws and absolve the guilty. Not so the inferior judge, since he has to bring everything to the rule of law. But if the king grants to the inferior judge the power of absolving all those, in whom he shall find indications of true sorrow or penitence, this absolution will be nothing else than a declaration, whereby he pronounces that this or that man has obtained pardon from the prince. In the same way, God, as Supreme Judge, remits properly and of His own power: the minister, as an inferior judge, only by declaring and announcing the judgement and sentence of the Eternal Judge."

9. DR. JOHN WHITE must have been a writer of authority in his day, since he is quoted as such by Dean Boys^o, Bp. Andrewes and Bp. Cosin^p. Writing on confession against the Roman practice and in defence of our's, he says,

"^q This answer being made to the Popish shrift, for the removing of the general, absolute, and perpetual necessity thereof, which the Papists urge: we are to add concerning the point the doctrine of our Church, which doth not deny or take away the free and godly use of confession, but teacheth that *it is very profitable* when it is discreetly done upon just occasion, and a godly, learned and trusty minister may be had for the searching of the wounds of sinful souls and applying of fit counsel and comfort to distressed consciences; and therefore our Church *exhorteth*, when any cannot so well by himself apply the means prescribed in the word, to himself for the quieting of his conscience,

^o Below p. xcii. note n. ^p Bp. Andrewes Minor Works p. 155.
Ang. Cath. Lib. ^q Way to the true Church § 40, p. 231. ed. 1610.

but requires further counsel or comfort therein, then to resort to some discreet and learned minister of God's word, and to open his grief, as it is in the second exhortation before the Communion. For which purpose also a form of absolution is prescribed in the visitation of the sick, to be used after special confession, in sickness as well of mind as of body.

10. BISHOP MORTON, like Overall, says, that the only question between us and Rome is as to the "absolute necessity of private confession" to salvation.

"It is not questioned between us (as their own Cardinal witnesseth) whether it be convenient for a man burthened with sin to lay open his conscience in private unto the minister of God, and to seek at his hands both the counsel of instruction and the comforts of God's pardon: but whether there be (as from Christ's institution) *such an absolute necessity of this private confession*, as that without it there can be no remission or pardon hoped for from God." "The power of absolution, whether it be general or particular, whether in public or in private, it is professed in our Church: where both in her public service is proclaimed pardon and absolution upon all penitents, and a private applying of absolution unto particular penitents by the office of the minister; and greater power than this no man hath received from God."

11. DR. PETER HEYLYN explains in like way the doctrine of our Church, in contrast with Rome and the Puritans, asserts private confession to be agreeable to the Church of England, while admitting—not that it was not in use—but not so much as ought to be.

* Morton, *Catholike Appeale*, A.D. 1609. p. 253.

* *Ib.* p. 270.

“The main point in dispute is touching the confession of our sins to men, and the authority of sacerdotal absolution. . . . First, for confession to be made to the priest or minister, it is agreeable both to the doctrine and intent of the Church of England, though not so much in practice as it ought to be.”

“What then? Is there no difference in this point between Rome and us? Assuredly, especially as to the necessity and particularity. For those of Rome impose an absolute necessity of this sacramental confession. “Now as we disagree with those of the Church of Rome about the nature and necessity of private confession, so we have no less difference with the grandees of the Puritan faction.” “The Church hath taught us, that absolution is [not only declarative, but] authoritative and judicial too. Authoritative, not by a proper, natural, and original power; for so the absolving of a sinner appertains unto God alone; but by a delegated and derived power, communicated to the Priest in that clause of their commission, *whose sins soever ye remit, they are remitted; and whose sins soever ye retain, they are retained.* Which proves the Priest to have a *power of remitting sins*, and that in as express and ample manner, as he can receive it. But though it be a delegated ministerial power, yet doth not the descent thereof from Almighty God prove it to be the less judicial. Then Judges, and other ministers of justice sitting on the Bench, may be said to exercise a judicial power on the lives and fortunes of the subjects; because they do it by virtue of the king’s commission, not out of any *sovereign power* which they challenge to themselves in their several circuits.

• Theol. Vet. p. 485.

• Ib. p. 487.

• Ib. p. 488.

“^jThe sacerdotal power of forgiving sins is a derived or delegated ministerial power: but it is judicial also, not declarative only.—No man, not in priestly order, can absolve from sin,—because he wants the power of order, to which the promise is annexed by our Saviour Christ, which makes the sentence of the priest to be so judicial: which, when the penitent doth hear from the mouth of the Minister, he need not doubt, *in foro conscientiae*, but that his sins be as verily forgiven on earth, as if he had heard Christ Himself, *in foro judicii*, pronouncing them with His own mouth to be forgiven in Heaven.”

12. ARCHBISHOP BRAMHALL makes the same distinction between the power of God and the conditional authority, which He delegates to man, but declares that a little shame before our fellow-servant may prevent the great shame on the Day of Judgement.

“²We do acknowledge that, in Penitence, pastors of the Church have a dependent ministerial power of loosing from sin; but that the primitive imperial original power is God’s. God’s power is absolute; man’s power is only conditional, to loose a man, if he be contrite and aptly disposed.”

“^aWe acknowledge, that he who is ordained, is enabled by his office many ways to put away sins: . . . 5. By special absolution. The Priest absolves; or to say more properly, God absolves by the Priest. ‘Whose sins ye remit they are remitted.’ “^bProtestants condemn not private confession and absolution itself, as an ecclesiastical policy, to make men more wary how they offend; so as it

^j Theol. Vet. p. 489.

^a Of Protestants’ Ordination P. iv. Disc. vi. Works v. 190.

^a Ib. p. 213.

^b Ib. p. 222.

ABp. Wake. We never fail to exhort sick to confess. lxxi

might be left free, without tyrannical imposition. . . . By a little shame, which we suffer before our fellow-servant, we prevent that great confusion of face, which otherwise must fall upon impenitent sinners at the Day of Judgement.”

13. ARCHBISHOP WAKE, regretting the non-observance of public discipline, insists that our Church exhorts to confession especially before Holy Communion and in sickness, but in that he says “especially,” he does not limit it to those occasions. In regard to the confession of the sick, a grave writer, like Archbishop Wake, could never have said ‘we never fail to exhort them’ unless it had been the habitual practice. Else it had been a lie.

“^c For Penance and Confession we wish our Discipline were both more strictly required, and more duly observed than it is. The Canons of our Church do perhaps require as much as the primitive Christians themselves did; and it is more *the decay of piety* in the people, than any want of care in her, that they are not as well and regularly practised.”

“^d The Church of England refuses no sort of confession, either public or private, which may be any way necessary to the quieting of men’s consciences, or to the exercising of that power of binding and loosing, which our Saviour Christ has left to His Church. We have our penitential canons for public offenders; we exhort men, if they have any the least doubt or scruple, nay sometimes though they have none, but especially before they receive the holy Sacrament, to confess their sins. We propose to them the benefit not only of ghostly advice, how to manage

^c Exposition of the doctrine of the Church of England, Art. xi. p. 40. It was inserted in Bp. Gibson’s preservative against Popery T. iii. p. 36.

^d Ib. p. 42.

their repentance, but the great comfort of Absolution too, as soon as they shall have completed it.—When we visit our sick, we *never fail* to exhort them to make a special confession of their sins to him that ministers to them: and when they have done it, the absolution is so full, that the Church of Rome itself could not desire to add anything to it.”

14. I will add, for the greatness of his name, one of the last century, BISHOP BERKELEY, writing to one, inclined to join the Roman Communion.

“^e I had forgot to say a word of confession, which you mention as an advantage in the Church of Rome, which is not to be had in ours. But it may be had in our communion by any who please to have it; and, I admit it, may be very usefully practised.”

II. The meaning of our formularies is so plain, that those who write upon them cannot but acknowledge it. It remains for them only more or less to point it. Thus,

1. BP. SPARROW, who was one of the Commissioners at the Savoy Conference, has on the rubric, “if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter,” the memorable words, “^f it should be considered whether every deadly sin be not a weighty matter.”

He writes more fully in a celebrated Sermon^g, which he preached before the University of Cambridge, A. D. 1637 on “Confession of sins and the power of Absolution.” He sums up what he had said on the nature of Confession, “Where is a Confessor all this while? Where is any to take

^e Letter to Sir John James, 1741. Berkeley's Works. iv. p. 278. Clar. Press. ^f Rationale on the C. Prayer. p. 212. ed. 7. A. D. 1722.

^g Printed after the Rationale pp. 312, 313.

our Confessions?" and, having said that the confession must be "to Him Who hath the power of Absolution," i. e. God, he subjoins,

"But there is another Confessor, that should not be neglected. *Qui confiteri vult, ut inveniat gratiam, quærat Sacerdotem scientem solvere et ligare*, saith S. Augustine: He that would be sure of pardon, let him seek out a Priest, and make his humble confession unto him. For God, Who alone hath the prime original right of forgiving sins, hath delegated the Priests His judges here on earth, and given them the power of Absolution; so that they can, in His Name, forgive the sins of those, that humbly confess unto them. But is not this blasphemy, said the Scribes once? Is it not Popery, say some with us now? Take the counsel that is given in Job, *Enquire of the former generations; ask the fathers, and they shall tell thee*. Ask then S. Chrysostom, and hear what he saith, in his fifth Homily upon these words of Isaiah, *I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne*. 'What is comparable,' saith he, 'to the power of the Priest, to whom Christ hath said, *whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven*? Heaven waits and expects the Priest's sentence here on earth. For the Priest sits Judge on earth; the Lord follows the servant, and what the servant binds or looses on earth, [^h *clave non errante*,] that the Lord confirms in heaven.' Words so clear for the *judiciary* formal Absolution of the Priest, as nothing can be said more plain."

"ⁱ But to put all out of doubt, let us search the Scriptures. Look into the 20th of S. John, *Whosoever sins ye remit*,

^a Bp. Sparrow inserts this, as also he translates freely.

¹ Sermon l.c. pp. 314, 315.

lxxiv *Bp. Sparrow; Priests pronounce as deputed judges.*

they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. Here is plainly a power of remitting sins granted to the Priest by our Blessed Saviour. Nor can it be understood of remitting sins by preaching, as some expound it, nor by baptising, as others guess. For both these, ‘preach’ and ‘baptise,’ they could do long before; but this power of remitting they received not till now, that is, after His Resurrection. That they could preach and baptise before, is plain; preach they might, they had a licence for it (S. Matt. x. 7.) *As ye go, preach, saying, &c.* And baptise they could, and did, (S. John iv. 2.) *Though Jesus Himself baptised not, but His disciples.* But this power of remission in the text they received not till now, that is, after His Resurrection; as appears, first by the ceremony of Breathing, by that signifying that then He infused that power into them, which He bid them receive: And secondly, by the word ‘Receive,’ which He could not properly have used, if they had been imbued with it before. So then it is not the Power of preaching or baptising, which is here given to the Apostles; but, as the Fathers interpret the place, a peculiar Power of pronouncing, as God’s deputed judges, pardon and remission to the penitent; a Power of absolving from sins, in the Name of God, all such as penitently confess unto them. A Form of which Absolution our holy Mother the Church hath prescribed in the ‘Visitation for the sick.’

2. L’ESTRANGE.

“^k Here the Church approveth of, though she doth not command, auricular confession. Many times poor souls lie labouring under the pangs of a horrid reflex upon the

^k The Alliance of Divine Offices, Annot. upon *Confession and Absolution*. p. 448. Ang. Cath. ed. L’Estrange was a layman.

number or greatness of their sins, and the dreadful wrath of God deservedly expected for them. In this case, no remedy comparable to an humble and sincere confession at large, common to all, and sometimes restrained to some one particular predominant sin, of whose pressure he finds the greatest weight; upon which confession, mixed with a vehement and earnest plying the throne of God for mercy, it becomes the minister instantly to interpose, to lay before him the inexhaustible treasure of God's infinite mercies, to assure him of his interest therein, and upon the hypothesis of his contrition to be serious and unfeigned, to give him Absolution."

3. DR. NICHOLLS.

"¹ It is very plain from this passage that our Church does not condemn private confession and absolution; though she does not universally require them, (as the Church of Rome does,) as being necessary for the pardon of all sins."

4. DEAN COMBER not only states simply the meaning of the exhortation in the service for Holy Communion, but expresses a hearty wish, that it were more acted upon.

"^m With us it [confession] is restored to its Primitive use, for we direct all men always to confess to God; but some also to confess their faults and reveal their doubts to the Priest, especially in these three cases; (1) When we are disquieted with the guilt of some sin already committed; or (2) when we cannot conquer some lust or passion; or (3) when we are afflicted with any intricate

¹ Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer, on the Exhortation in the Order of the Holy Communion.

^m Companion to the Altar, on the warning for Holy Communion, pp. 132—134. 1681.

scruples, particularly whether we may now be fit to receive this blessed Sacrament or no. If any of these be our case, then *first*, we must choose prudently, preferring our own Minister, if he be tolerably fitted, or else we may elect another that is prudent and pious, learned and judicious; one who may manage this weighty concern gravely and privately, and dispatch it wisely and fully to our satisfaction. Being thus provided of a guide, *secondly*, Let us deal sincerely, and open our grief to him as fully and impartially as we would do a wound to a skilful Chirurgeon: let not fear or shame stop our mouths—If the conscience be wounded with guilt, he hath power from Christ upon our contrition to give us Absolution—Wherefore I do heartily wish we were more frequent in these applications to our Ministers; it would argue that we were more concerned for a pardon and more sensible of our guilt; nay it would shew we did perfectly hate sin, when we would be content to suffer the shame of discovery, so we might have the benefit of amendment.”

In his comment on the office ‘for the Visitation of the sick’ he expresses the same wish that confession were more frequent in health, both for “the better regulation of our lives,” and that the minister might be able better to help us when death is at hand.

“ⁿ We should now proceed to the consolations, but only for fear that any secret sin should hinder the sick from receiving the benefit of them, we first advise him to a special confession, if his conscience accuse him for any great transgression; and this is no more than God requires by His holy apostle S. James; for, after the order for

ⁿ The occasional Offices explained in the method of the Companion to the Temple. ‘The second part of the Exhortation contained in the rubric, ‘Then shall the sick man be moved,’ pp. 308—313.

death; if not used before, the more need in sickness. lxxvii

the sick man to send for the elders of the Church to pray over him, and the promises of recovery and remission, he adds, 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed: the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;' whence it appears to be our duty to confess our sins, not only to God, but to men also, especially to the elders of the Church, mentioned in the former verse, and meant here by the title of 'a righteous man,' a name properly given to the ministers of God. . . . And this was so received a doctrine in the primitive times, that the confession of sins to a priest, in case of a troubled conscience, was esteemed an Apostolical institution, and was a general practice, as might be proved by innumerable testimonies of Antiquity. We Protestants ought not to reject this holy Rite, but to reduce it to its Primitive institution: we wish, that our people, even in time of health, (when their conscience is troubled for some great sin, or their souls are assaulted with a violent temptation,) would come and make their case known to their Spiritual Physician, to whom the Fathers elegantly compare the priest in this case. For if we blush to shew our wounds to them, we cannot expect they should cure that which they are not suffered to see: and if this were constantly practised in our health, we should not only be rarely assisted in order to the continual regulation of our lives; but when sickness and death comes, the holy man would be better able to assist us, as being no stranger to the state of our souls, and we ourselves should have less work to do when our last conflict comes. But if we have omitted this before, we have more need to send speedily for God's minister in our sickness, which is the special time, in which S. James enjoins

lxxviii Dean Comber. *Confn. in danger of death, practice*

us to confess to the elders of the Church : and of the benefit of this last Confession the thief upon the Cross was a great example, who, confessing his offence, was accepted immediately, not only into Christ's favour, but His Kingdom. And therefore this confession of the sick was enjoined, not only by foreign Councils, but by the ancient Canons of our own Patriarchs, and the Constitutions of our own nations of old. Yea Dion. Carthus. affirms, 'It is the custom of all Christians to confess their sins when they suppose themselves in danger of death.' So that this is so far from being a peculiar practice of the Roman Church, that it was always, and is now an universal Rite, observed not only by the English Protestants, but by the reformed foreign Churches, as is often noted by their historian. And particularly, he remarks, that the famous Brentius before his death, making a private confession of his sins, requested and received Absolution, and was partaker of the holy Sacrament. But besides these examples, we have special reason for the confessing of our sins to the Priest now. *First*, Because our sins usually appear most terrible in the approaches of death, and those offences, that we made light of in time of health, do now lie heavy upon us, and since no confession is so acceptable as that which flows from true contrition, doubtless we are in best temper to confess, when the rod and the grace of God together have made us most sensible of our guilt and danger ; and besides, if we smother this grief, it may turn to a dangerous despair, whereas an ingenuous confession will ease our minds and invite our compassionate spiritual Physician to administer proper comforts to us.

... It concerns us to know our state now, while we

may rectify that which is amiss, and prevent God's dreadful judgement, of which we should stand in so much dread, as not to dare to trust our own too favourable opinion of ourselves, but unbosom ourselves to him whom God hath appointed to aid us in this weighty matter. Lastly, men ought to confess their sins in sickness, to give sufficient evidence of their repentance. A sick man cannot attest his sincerity by so many proofs as one in health may do. . . . The best and almost the only means he hath to testify his unfeigned repentance, is to be willing to offer himself to the shame of discovery, which is an excellent sign he will amend if ever he regain his health, because he shuns not reproof neither seeks concealment ; this manifests he is convinced of his fault and sorry for it, that he extremely detests it, and resolves never to commit it more, since he hath unveiled that accursed privacy wherein it seemed to be securely acted before : nor will a true penitent be hindered from this free confession by the little shame that attends it, since he knows he hath deserved shame, and desires by his ingenuous blushes before a pious and compassionate friend, to prevent being shamed before men and angels at the last day."

On the Absolution he remarks, that the combination of the Deprecative and Indicative parts is very ancient, the first relating to our Lord, Who has the supreme power to forgive, the latter, to the power which He has delegated to the Priest ; he sums up,

" ° Jesus gave this power to His Apostles, and they to their successors who communicated it to us by prayers and imposition of hands at our Ordination, saying, ' Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins ye remit, they are

° Occasional Offices l.c. Of the Absolution, p. 320.

lxxx *Wheatley; mistakes benefits of absolution, but in*

remitted' &c. And now when we see good evidence that the sick man is prepared to receive this grace, and know he needs it exceedingly, and will be wonderfully supported by it, we give it him in God's name, and he ought to look on us but as the instruments to convey the pardon which Jesus gives. . . . The absolution is only ministerially conveyed by the priest; but the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in Whose name it is pronounced, do join in the confirmation thereof."

5. WHEATLEY's opinion, that the Church of England, in the form of Absolution in the Service for the sick, meant only an Absolution from Church censures is remarkable, not to say strange, since the part of the Absolution in the Sarum ritual^p, which relates to Church censures, is omitted, and the sins, which the Priest is to "move the sick man to confess," are sins, which lie upon his conscience, of which the Church has known nothing, and on which it has pronounced no censure. Yet he recognises that the Church of England did judiciously, in leaving confession free, but yet admitting it. And not this only, but he expresses a wish, that people used it oftener in health too, and fears that some omitted it to their soul's hurt.

"No argument sure can be drawn, that because a practice has been abused, it should therefore cease to be used. The abuses of it should be reformed, but not the practice discontinued. And therefore the Church of England at

^p *"Et sacramentis ecclesiae te restituo."* Man. Sarisb. f. 91 in Palmer, Orig. Lit. T. ii. p. 227. The subsequent prayer, which Wheatley quotes to support his argument, corresponds with this omission; for whereas the Sarum Manual has a prayer, '*restore* [restitute] this sick member to the unity of the body of Thy Church, having received the remission of sins;' (Ib. p. 92.) our prayer is, "*preserve and continue* this sick person in the unity of the Church," as never having been separated from it.

view of its benefits, wishes confession more frequent. lxxxii

the reformation, in the particular now before us, freed it from all the encroachments with which the Church of Rome had embarrassed it, and reduced confession to its primitive plan. She neither calls it a sacrament, nor requires it to be used as universally necessary." Then, quoting the exhortation in the Service for Holy Communion and the advice in Edward vith first book, he adds, "What could have been added more judiciously than this, to temper, on the one hand, the rigours of those who were too apt at that time to insist upon confession, as always absolutely necessary to salvation : and to prevent, on the other hand, a carelessness in those who, being prejudiced against the abuse, were apt indiscriminately to reject the thing, as at no time needful or useful to a penitent. So that we may still, I presume, wish, very consistently with the determinations of our Church, that our people would apply themselves, oftener than they do, to their spiritual physicians, even in the time of their health ; since it is much to be feared, that they are wounded oftener than they complain, and yet, through aversion to disclosing their sore, suffer it to gangrene, for want of their help, who should work the cure."

"But present ease is not the only benefit the penitent may expect from his confessor's aid : he will be better assisted in the regulation of his life ; and when his last conflict shall make its approach, the holy man, being no stranger to the state of his soul, will be better prepared to guide and conduct it through all difficulties that may oppose. However, if we have neglected to communicate our doubts and scruples in our health, we have more need of following the apostle's advice when we are sick, viz. *to call for the elders of the church, and to confess our faults*

in order to engage their *fervent prayers*. For this reason, though our Church leaves it in a manner to every one's discretion, in the time of health, whether they will be satisfied with a general confession to God and the Church, yet when they are sick, she thinks it proper that they 'be **MOVED** to make a special confession of their sins to the Priest, if they feel their conscience troubled with any weighty matter.' For how will he be able to satisfy their doubts, if he be not let into the particulars of their case? Or with what assurance can he absolve them, or admit them to the peace and communion of the Church, before he is apprised, how far they have deserved its censure and bonds? If then they are desirous of the following consolations which the Church has provided for their quiet and ease, it is fit they should first declare and make known what burden it is, from which they want to be freed. How far the Church can assist or relieve them, or what consolations they are which she administers, the Absolution here prescribed will lead us to consider: which, with the Collect that follows, shall be made the subject of the next section."

The like statements occur also in later writers on the articles.

6. **BP. TOMLINE** while writing against, what he calls "the Popish Sacrament of Penance," is compelled by the force of truth to acknowledge that the Church of England "encourages" confession.

"¹ Confession of sin to God is an indispensable duty, and confession to priests may sometimes be useful, by leading to effectual repentance: and therefore our Church encou-

¹ Scriptural Exposition of the xxxix Articles; Art. xxv.

rages its members to use confidential confession to their priest, or to any other minister of God's holy Word¹."

7. DR. HEY, a lax writer, also writing against the Church of Rome and confession in it, is constrained to admit,

"Confession, in some sort private, is often commended by our divines, and even in our liturgy: we may instance in the first exhortation to the Communion, and in the Visitation of the Sick."

He defines "judicial," "relating to the Judge from Whom is no appeal," Who must of course be God.

"In order to have an idea even of the historical part of the subject, one must attend to the distinction between ministerial and judicial. A person gives ministerial absolution when he acts as a minister or agent under God as a principal; judicial, when he acts in the capacity of a judge from whom lies no appeal. Nor can we proceed rightly without remarking here, that all judicial absolution must consist in releasing offenders from punishments inflicted by religious society among men, or from Church censures: and that all anticipation of the day of judgement, in absolving, must be ministerial; its end, to warn and comfort: though every decision of a minister or agent will undoubtedly be ratified, if the agent acts in his proper character, and is rightly informed; which he cannot be, except the repentance, in any case before him, be sincere: and as he can only pronounce absolution on supposition of sincerity in his penitent, his absolution must be, in some sort, conditional."

8. BISHOP HAROLD BROWNE, while distinguishing confession, as used among us, from that in the Church of Rome,

¹ Quoting Exhort. in Comm. Service.

² On Art. xxv. Lectures T. iv. 218.

³ Ib. 220, 221.

quotes the two exhortations in the Communion-Service and the Visitation of the sick.

“^a Thus the Church of England provides for all troubled consciences the power of relieving themselves, by making confession of guilt to their pastor or ‘any other discreet and learned minister,’ and so gives them comfort and counsel; but does not bind every one, of necessity, to rehearse all his private sins to man, nor elevate such useful confession into a sacrament essential to salvation.”

Even while warning against the misuse of confession, he says, “^x Access to confession is not to be denied to the dying, the perplexed, or the broken-hearted.”

III. It will seem strange to the modern assailants of confession that two of the earliest practical writers, who recommend auricular confession, as a religious practice, should be Puritan writers.

i. WILLIAM TURNER, Dean of Wells, who is placed among the reformers, even marvels, that, since God had attached such promises to confession, any were not drawn to it. The main exception, which he makes, is grounded on the ignorance of the then Confessors.

“^y We do not utterly forsake auricular or ear confession : but the additions of man’s traditions are parted and sundered from wholesome doctrine, as chaff is from the corn. . . .

{ “If any doubt arise in our consciences, whom ought we rather to go to and ask counsel, than of the head man of our souls? Furthermore, when we be faint-hearted, or have no courage, and are vexed with temptations, *we may*

^a On the Articles. Art. xxv. p. 587.

^x Ib. p. 588.

^y The Old and New Learning. Tracts of Anglican Fathers, Vol. iv. p. 607, 608. Hatchard, 1809.

not despise the remedy that God ordained. Thou hast God's word, Matt. xviii. John xx. '*Whose sins ye remit*' &c. Whom would not these fatherly promises provoke and allure to confession, when the conscience is lifted up and established, not by man's word, but by God's word spoken by man's mouth?"

"Let the Bishops appoint learned men to hear confessions, and not blockheads, and then the people shall come to the priests by heaps and swarms. The which thing while they do not, let them blame themselves and not us, if the people set little by their curates."

ii. The belief of THOMAS BECON, how Absolution is effective, was different probably from that of any, who accept or reject it now. Yet he is urgent that it be used, and he believes in its instantaneous operation.

"* Why auricular confession should be condemned and exiled from the bounds of Christianity, I see no cause; but that it should be approved, retained, maintained, and used, I find causes many, yea, and these right urgent and necessary. . . . That it is a thing of much weight and grave importance, it appeareth well, inasmuch as it bringeth to men divers ample commodities and large profits. . . . It bringeth high tranquillity to the troubled conscience of a Christian man, while the most comfortable words of Absolution are rehearsed to him by the Priest." "And when he shall rehearse unto you the most sweet and comfortable words of Absolution, give earnest faith unto them, being undoubtedly persuaded that your sins at that time be assuredly forgiven you, as though God Himself had spoken them, according to that saying of Christ, '*He that*

* Potation for Lent. Parker Society Ed. p. 100. * Ib. p. 101. The "Potation" was revised by Becon 1560—1564, but the paragraph, in which this passage occurs, was left unaltered.

heareth you, heareth Me;’ and again, ‘Whose sins ye forgive, are forgiven them.’”

iii. HOOKER, to whom the epithet of “judicious” was still, in this century, as much appropriated, as “swift of foot” was by Homer to Achilles, and who is himself recorded to have used confession^b, insists on the freedom of using or not using confession.

“Such complements are helps to support our weakness, and not causes that serve to produce His gifts.”

“For private confession and absolution it stands thus with us; the minister’s power to absolve is publicly taught and professed; the Church not denied to have authority either of abridging or enlarging the use and exercise of that power; upon the people no such necessity imposed of opening their transgressions unto men, as if remission of sins otherwise were impossible; neither any such opinion had of the thing itself, as though it were either unlawful or unprofitable, saving only for those inconveniences, which the world hath by experience observed in it heretofore. And in regard thereof, the Church of England hitherto hath thought it the safer way, to refer men’s hidden crimes unto God and themselves only; howbeit, not without special caution, for admonition of such as come to the holy Sacrament, and for the comfort of such as are ready to depart the world.”

“First, because there are but few that consider how much that part of divine service which consisteth in partaking the holy Eucharist doth import their souls; what they lose by neglect thereof, and what by devout practice they might attain unto: therefore, lest carelessness of general

^b Walton’s lives, *Life of Hooker*, p. 188. Christian knowledge Ed.

^c *Eccles. Pol.* vi. iv. 15. T. iii. p. 50. 2nd ed. Keble.

confession should, as commonly it doth, extinguish all remorse of men's particular enormous crimes; our custom (whenever men present themselves at the Lord's Table) is, solemnly to give them very fearful admonition what woes are perpendicularly hanging over the heads of such as dare adventure to put forth their unworthy hands to those admirable mysteries of life, which have by rare examples been proved conduits of irremediable death to impenitent receivers; whom therefore as we repel being known, so being not known we can but terrify."

"^d Leaving therefore unto His judgement those whom we cannot stay from casting their souls into so great hazard, we have, in the other part of penitential jurisdiction, in our power and authority to release sin, joy on all sides, without trouble or molestation unto any.

"They which during life and health, are never destitute of ways to delude repentance, do notwithstanding oftentimes, when their last hour draweth on, both feel that sting which before lay dead in them, and also thirst after such helps as have been always till then unsavoury."

"Because to countervail the faults of delay, there are in the latest repentance oftentimes the surest tokens of sincere dealing; therefore, upon special confession made to the minister of God, he presently absolveth in this case the sick party from all his sins by that authority which Jesus Christ hath committed unto him, knowing that God respecteth not so much what time is spent, as what truth is shewed in repentance."

"If peace with God do not follow the pains we have taken in seeking after it, if we continue disquieted, and not delivered from anguish, mistrusting whether that we do be

^d Ib. l.c. p. 52.

sufficient; it argueth that our sore doth exceed the power of our own skill, and that the wisdom of the pastor must bind up those parts, which, being bruised, are not able to be recured of themselves."

But more widely; in assigning the reason "which moved sinners thus voluntarily to detect themselves both in private and public," he names one, which applied to all times, and which must have moved himself to confession.

"Because the knowledge, how to handle our own sores is no vulgar or common art, but we either carry towards ourselves, for the most part, an over-soft and gentle hand, fearful of touching too near the quick; or else, endeavouring not to be partial, we fall into timorous scrupulosities, and sometimes into those extreme discomforts of mind, from which we hardly do ever lift up our heads again; men thought it the safest way to disclose their secret faults, and to crave imposition of penance from them, whom our Lord Jesus Christ hath left in His Church to be spiritual and ghostly physicians, the guides and pastors of redeemed souls, whose office doth not only consist in general persuasions to amendment of life, but also in the private particular cure of diseased minds."

iv. BISHOP ANDREWES, who, after 2½ centuries, is still accounted one of the most thoughtful and fervid of our preachers, begins his sermon on our Lord's words, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them;"

"They be the words of our Saviour Christ to His Apostles; they contain a commission by Him granted to the Apostles.

"Which commission is His first largess after His rising

* Eccl. Pol. vi. iv. 7. pp. 30, 31.

† Sermon on Absolution, Sermon iv. T. v. p. 82. ed. Ang. Cath. ed.

again. For at His first appearing to them, it pleased Him not to come empty but with a blessing, and to bestow on them and on the world by them, as the first-fruits of His resurrection, this commission; a part of that commission which the sinful world most of all stood in need of, for remission of sins."

He closes the Sermon;

"* And here I should now speak somewhat of the applying or use of it, but the time hath overtaken me and will not permit it. Now only a word of the third part, of the efficacy, or, as the lawyers term it, of God's ratihibition, and so an end.

"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew to them that should be partakers of it the stableness of His counsel, He hath penned it exceedingly effectually, and indeed strangely to them that deeply consider of it; which He hath so done, to the end that thereby such poor sinners as shall be partakers of it might have strong consolation and perfect assurance, not to waver in the hope which is set before them.

"And to that end, even for comfort, I will only point at four things in the inditing of it, all expressing the efficacy of it in more than common manner.

"1. The order is this, that 'ye remit' standeth first, and 'are remitted' second. It is S. Chrysostom's note, that it beginneth in earth, and that heaven followeth after. So that whereas in prayer and in other parts of religion it is 'as in heaven, so in earth,' here it is, 'as in earth, so in heaven.' A terra judicandi principalem auctoritatem sumit cœlum. For the judge sits on earth; the Lord follows His servant, and whatever judgement the servant gives here

* Ib. l. c. p. 101.

below, that judgement the Lord ratifies above, saith he.

"2. The time in this, that it is 'are remitted' in the present tense; there is no delay between, no deferring or holding in suspense, but the absolution pronounced upon earth, 'are remitted,' presently they are remitted; that He saith not, hereafter they shall be, but they 'are' already 'remitted.'

"3. The manner, in setting down of the two words. For it is so delivered by Christ, as if He were content it should be accounted their act, and that the Apostles were the agents in it, and Himself but the patient, and suffered it to be done. For the Apostles' part is delivered in the active, 'ye remit,' and His own in the passive, 'are remitted.'

"4. The certainty; which in the identity of the word, in not changing the word, but keeping the selfsame in both parts. For Christ hath not thus indited it: 'Whose sins ye wish or ye pray for,' or, 'Whose sins ye declare to be remitted;' but, 'Whose sins ye remit;' using no other word in the Apostles' than He useth in His own. And to all these, in S. Matthew, He addeth His solemn protestation of 'Verily, verily;' or, 'Amen, Amen,' that so it is and shall be. And all to certify us that He fully meaneth with effect to ratify in heaven that is done in earth, to the sure and stedfast comfort of them that shall partake it."

And of himself, personally, he says, in the devotions, which he framed, and which, upon his departure, were found, it is recorded, "moistened with his pious tears;"

"¹ My soul doth praise the Lord—for Thy mercies towards

¹ Andrewes' Devotions, translated from the Greek, for the third day. pp. 66, 67. ed. 1848.

thanksgiving for his own; sovereign benefit of Abs. xci

myself, soul body and estate—keeping me from perishing in my sins, fully waiting my conversion, leaving in me return into my heart, remembrance of my latter end, shame, horror, grief for my past sins, fuller and larger, larger and fuller, more and still more, O my Lord, storing me with good hope of their remission through repentance and its works; *in the power of the thrice-holy Keys* and the mysteries in Thy Church.” “ⁱEvery day will I give thanks unto Thee, and praise Thy Name for ever and ever,—— Who hast opened to me a gate of hope while I confess and implore, *through the power of Thy mysteries and the Keys.*”

In his Mss. Notes on the Prayer-book ^k on the words ‘That he may receive . . . the benefit of absolution,’ he says, “It is most expedient that this be read, to induce the people that they bethink themselves of the sovereign benefit of absolution by their penitent confession.”

v. JOHN BOYS, Dean of Canterbury, wrote a work once much read, “Exposition of the Festival Epistles and Gospels used in our English Liturgy,” in the rather unrefined style common in his age, yet with a good deal of freshness, a large miscellaneous reading and good quotations from the fathers. He himself ascribes his knowledge as well as his being, to God as their Giver ^l. In his exposition of the Gospel for the 19th Sunday after Trinity, he expresses his unfeigned wish that confession and absolution were restored unto their primitive sincerity. Unhappily it is not a passage, which gives any idea of his better style.

^l Private Devotions, translated from the Latin. pp. 13, 17. ed. 1846.

^k Minor Works p. 155. Ang. Cath.

ⁱ In his Title page, he is represented kneeling with the motto, “In eo sumus et scimus.”

“^m In that Christ said here, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee,’ notwithstanding He knew the Scribes would murmur and mutter against His speech, He teacheth us to be faithful in our calling, and diligent in doing our duty, maugre the beard of all captious and cavilling adversaries.—‘Hath then Almighty God *given such power unto men*, as to pronounce the pardon of sin to the sick man in his bed?’ Is the doctrine of confession and absolution agreeable to the Scriptures and practice of the Church as well present as primitive? Then, albeit some scribbling scribe pen an invective pamphlet against a discreet pastor executing this office, or some self-conceited Pharisee tell the people ‘this man blasphemeth,’ he may notwithstanding (upon good information of faith and repentance, as Christ in this place) say to the sick sinner in his bed, ‘thy sins are forgiven thee,’ and by Christ’s authority committed unto him I absolve thee.’ That absolution, as well private as publick, belongs principally, yea properly, *tanquam ex officio*, to the Minister, as Christ’s Ambassador, in his ecclesiastical function, I refer you to the Postiles of Melancthon &cⁿ. For my own part, I wish unfeignedly that, all popish abuses of Confession and Absolution utterly abolished, they might one day be more fully restored in our Protestant Churches unto their primitive sincerity.”

vi. Of DR. DONNE, (died A.D. 1631,) it is needless to say any thing, after the biography of Isaac Walton. His words are part of a sermon, preached to the king’s household at

^m Works p. 522.

ⁿ He quotes besides, Culmann, Zepperus upon this place, Bucer in artic. Concordiæ; Melancthon in S. Matt. xviii. 18, in Joann. xx. 23, de pœnit. tit. Confessio. T. 2. f. 191. Olevian de subst. fœderis P. ii. pp. 298. sqq. Luther, Musculus, Cruciger ap. Melancth. in consiliis Theol. Field, of the Church, iii. 25; White, Way to the true Church pp. 230. 231.

Whitehall, and so not a simple statement of a truth but as something to be acted upon. He praises the tenderness of conscience which would make confession before every communion ;

“° For confession, we require public confession in the congregation ; and in time of sickness, upon the death-bed, we enjoin private and particular confession, if the conscience be oppressed ; and if any man do think that that which is necessary for him upon his death-bed, is necessary every time he comes to the Communion, and so come to such a confession, if anything lie upon him, as often as he comes to the Communion, we blame not, we dissuade not, we discourse not, that tenderness of conscience, and that safe proceeding in that good soul.”

vii. BISHOP LEWIS BAYLY P.

One of the most popular books of devotion, which the English Church ever had, is “The Practice of piety,” whose name at least is probably familiar to many who know not its author, which, early in the 17th century, was translated into Welsh, French and German, and, before the last dreary century, passed through 51 editions. It can hardly, even in these days, be represented as alien from the mind of the English Church.

“¹ (Table of Contents)—Of the comfortable use of true Absolution.”

“The sick person ought now to send for some godly and religious pastor.

° Serm. 139. near the end, preached to the Household at Whitehall, April 30. 1626. Sermons. T. v. p. 505. P L. Bayly, Bp. of Bangor, died A. 1632.

¹ “Practice of Piety, directing a Christian how to walk that he may please God.” pp. 432—439. The Rev. Canon Cooke, from whom this extract is taken, says, “I quote from the *fifty-first edition*, published in 1714 ; but I have seen a reference to the seventy-second edition.”

“In any wise remember (if conveniently it may be) to send for some godly and religious pastor, not only to pray for thee at thy death (for God in such a case hath promised to hear the prayers of the righteous prophets and elders of the Church), but also upon thy confession and unfeigned repentance to absolve thee of thy sins. For Christ hath given him a . . . calling and power, and authority (upon repentance) to absolve thee from thy sins. ‘I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ And again, ‘Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ And again, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.’ . . . These have the power to shut heaven, and to deliver (the scandalous impenitent sinner) to Satan: for the weapons of their warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to cast down &c., and to have vengeance in readiness against all disobedience. They have the key of loosing; therefore, the power of absolving.

“The Bishops and pastors of the Church do not forgive sins by any absolute power of their own, (for so only Christ their Master forgiveth sins,) but ministerially, as the servants of Christ, and stewards, to whose fidelity their Lord and Master hath committed His keys . . . For Christ from heaven doth by them (as by His ministers on earth) declare whom He remitteth and bindeth, and to whom He will open the gates of heaven, and against whom He will shut them. And therefore it is not said, ‘Whose sins ye

signify to be remitted,' but 'Whose sins ye remit.' They then do remit sins, because Christ by their ministry remitteth sins, as Christ by His disciples loosed Lazarus . . . Though another man may pronounce the same words, yet have they not the like efficacy and power to work on the conscience, as when they are pronounced from the mouth of Christ's ministers, because the promise is annexed to the Word of God in their mouths; for them hath He chosen, separated, and set apart for this work, and to them He hath committed the ministry and word of reconciliation: by their holy calling and ordination they have received the Holy Ghost, and the ministerial power of binding and loosing. They are sent forth of the Holy Ghost for this work, whereunto He hath called them.

"And Christ gives His ministers power to forgive sins to the penitent in the same words that He teacheth us in the Lord's Prayer to desire God to forgive us our sins: to assure all penitent sinners, that God, by His minister's absolution, doth fully, through the merits of Christ's Blood, forgive them all their sins . . . So that what Christ decreeth in heaven, in foro judicii, the same He declareth on earth by His reconciling ministers, in foro pœnitentiæ. So that as God hath reconciled the world to Himself by Jesus Christ, so hath He (saith the Apostle) given unto us the ministry of this reconciliation.

"Though others may comfort with good words, yet none can absolve from sin, but only those to whom Christ hath committed the holy ministry and word of reconciliation: and of their absolution Christ speaketh, 'He that heareth you heareth Me.' In a doubtful title thou wilt ask the counsel of a skilful lawyer; in peril of sickness thou wilt know the advice of the learned physician: and is there no

danger in dread of damnation, for a sinner to be his own judge?

“And verily there is not any means more excellent to humble a proud heart, nor to raise up an humble spirit, than this spiritual conference between the pastors and the people committed to their charge. If any sin therefore troubleth thy conscience, confess it to God’s minister; ask his counsel, and if thou dost truly repent, receive his absolution. And then doubt not, in foro conscientiæ, but thy sins be as verily forgiven on earth, as if thou didst hear Christ Himself, in foro judicii, pronouncing them to be forgiven in heaven. ‘He that heareth you, heareth Me.’ Try this, and tell me, whether thou shalt not find more ease in thy conscience than can be expressed in words. Did profane men consider the *dignity* of this divine calling, they would the more honour the *calling* and reverence the persons.”

viii. BISHOP HALL. There is perhaps scarce any writer in our Church, who for his love, affectionateness, simplicity and unction, is more loved than Bishop Hall. He was also a controversial writer: in one of his works, he takes a position of utter antagonism to Rome, entitling it “No peace with Rome.” Yet as a practical writer, concerned about the well-being of souls, he weighs the question of confession as a case of conscience.

Case ix.: “Whether I need, in case of some foul sin committed by me, to have recourse to God’s Minister for absolution; and what effect I may expect therefrom?” He answers;

^r Resolution and decision of divers practical cases of conscience. Case ix. Works T. vii. p. 451 sqq. ed. Hall. Bp. Hall died A.D. 1656.

“Two cases there are, wherein certainly there is a necessity of applying ourselves to the judgement of our spiritual guides.

“The first is, in our doubt of the nature and quality of the fact, whether it be a sin or no sin. . . . Whither shall we go in these doubts, but to our counsel, learned in the laws of God, of whom God Himself hath said by His prophet, ‘The priest’s lips should keep knowledge; and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts’?

“The second is, in the irresoluble condition of our souls, after a known sin committed; wherein the burdened conscience, not being able to give ease unto itself, seeks for aid to the sacred hand of God’s Penitentiary here on earth, and there may find it.

“If, after all these penitent endeavours, you find your soul still unquiet, and not sufficiently apprehensive of a free and full forgiveness, betake yourself to God’s faithful agent for peace; run to your ghostly physician; lay your bosom open before him; flatter not your own condition; let neither fear nor shame stay his hand from probing and searching the wound to the bottom; and that being done, make careful use of such spiritual applications, as shall be by him administered to you. This, this is the way to a perfect recovery and fulness of comfort.

“But you easily grant, that there may be very wholesome use of the ghostly counsel of your minister, in the case of a troubled soul: but you doubt of the validity and power of his absolution; concerning which it was a just question of the Scribes in the Gospel, ‘Who can forgive sins but God only?’ Our Saviour, therefore, to prove that

¹ l.c. Ib. p. 452.

² Ib. pp. 453, 454.

He had this power, argues it from His Divine Omnipotence: He only hath authority to forgive sins, that can say to the decrepid paralytic, 'Arise take up thy bed, and walk.' None but a God can, by His command, effect this. He is, therefore, the true God, that may absolutely say, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.' If therefore man or angel shall challenge to himself this absolute power to forgive sin, let him be accursed. Yet, withal, it must be yielded, that the blessed Son of God spake not those words of His last commission in vain: 'Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained:' neither were they spoken to the then present apostles only, but, in them, to all their faithful successors to the end of the world.

"It cannot, therefore, but be granted, that there is some kind of power left in the hand of Christ's ministers, both to remit and retain sin.

"Neither is this power given only to the governors of the Church, in relation to the censures to be inflicted or relaxed by them; but to all God's faithful ministers, in relation to the sins of men; a power, not sovereign and absolute, but limited and ministerial; for either quieting the conscience of the penitent, or further aggravating the conscience of sin and terror of judgement to the obstinate and rebellious.

"Neither is this only by way of a bare verbal declaration, which might proceed from any other lips; but in the way of an operative and effectual application, by virtue of that delegate or missionary authority, which is by Christ entrusted with them. For certainly our Saviour meant, in these words, to confer somewhat upon His ministers, more than the rest of the world should be capable to receive or perform.

“We may well say, that, whatsoever is in this case done by God’s minister, (the key not erring) is ratified in heaven.]

“Although, therefore, you may, perhaps, through God’s goodness, attain to such a measure of knowledge and resolution, as to be able to give yourself satisfaction concerning the state of your soul; yet it cannot be amiss, out of an abundant caution, to take God’s minister along with you, and, making him of your spiritual counsel, to unbosom yourself to him freely, for his fatherly advice and concurrence: the neglect whereof, through a kind of either strangeness or misconceit, is certainly not a little disadvantageous to the souls of many Christians.”

Bp. Hall here speaks of the disadvantage of its neglect to the souls of many. In his “Balm of Gilead, or the Comforter,” he dwells on its comfort.

Under the head ‘Comforts for the sick soul’ he speaks first, on “the happiness of a deep sorrow for sin,” and bids the penitent ‘weep still, and make not too much haste to dry up those tears,’ and then he teaches ‘The well-grounded declaration of pardon.’

“^vBut, when thou hast emptied thine eyes of tears, and unloaded thy breast of leisurely sighs, I shall then, by full commission from Him that hath the power of remission, say to thee, ‘Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee.’

“Think not this word merely formal and forceless. He that ‘hath the keys of hell and of death,’ hath not said in vain, ‘Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted.’ The words of His faithful ministers on earth are ratified in heaven...

“I am, howsoever unworthy, a messenger sent to thee

^v c. 2. s. i.

^v Ib. and sect. 2, Works vii. p. 122.

c' *G. Herbert; parson is to persuade to special confession.*

from heaven; and, in the name of that great God that sent me, I do here, upon the sight of thy serious repentance, before angels and men, declare thy soul to stand right in the court of heaven: the invaluable ransom of thy dear Saviour is laid down and accepted for thee: thou art delivered from going down into the pit of horror and perdition."

ix. **GEORGE HERBERT.** His book, *The Country Parson*, formed part of a series, put into our hands of old, as "*The Clergyman's Instructor*." Under the head, "*The Parson comforting*," he represents him as "persuading to particular confession; and how necessary it is in some cases."

"^w In his visiting the sick or otherwise afflicted, he followeth the Church's counsel, viz. in persuading them to particular confession; labouring to make them understand the great good use of this ancient and pious ordinance, and how necessary it is in some cases."

x. **J. MEDE** had the by-name, I think, of "the judicious" as well as "the learned." He lived in days, when the Bishop of Rome was still called Anti-Christ, and himself used the term. The sermon on repentance was one which he had carefully revised, having been preached before the University.

"^x An effect of this contrition is Confession; when out of a contrite and wounded heart, we acknowledge and lay open our sins before the face of Almighty God (our heavenly Father), begging pardon and forgiveness for them. A duty always necessary to be performed to God Himself, Whom we have chiefly and principally offended; and in some cases also convenient to be made unto His ministers,

^w *The Country Parson* c. xv. ^x *Disc.* xxvi. Works p. 109. fol. "*The larger discourses were preached before the University.*" General Pref.

Mede; benefit of confn; use of in early part of 17th cent. cñ

not only for advice, but for consolation, by that power and authority which God hath given them to exercise in His Name, according to that, ‘Whose sins ye remit, shall be remitted.’”

xi. A.D. 1627. the Pope sent PANZANI an Oratorian, to “pacify the dissensions between the secular and regular Clergy, respecting the appointment of a Bishop; but still to discover, if possible, his Majesty’s (Charles 1) sentiments on that point, and his general views respecting the Catholics.”

In his report he gives an account of the state of religion in the English Church also, and says on this point “the practice of auricular confession is praised.” He seems to be speaking especially, perhaps, of “public Sermons before the King and Court.”

xii. BISHOP COSIN², in his once popular^a ‘Collection of Private Devotions,’ set it down as the fifth of the Precepts of the Church;

“5. ^bTo receive the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ with frequent devotion, and three times a year at least, of which Easter to be always one. And for better preparation thereunto, as occasion is, to disburthen and quiet our consciences of those sins that may grieve us, or scruples that may trouble us, to a learned and discreet Priest, and from him to receive advice, and the benefit of absolution.”

² His account is dated 1627: see Butler, Hist. Mem. Vol. ii. p. 339. 1. ii.

^a Dr. Cosin A.D. 1627. was commissioned by Bp. White to draw up his manual; when it was drawn up, Mountain, Bp. of London put the imprimatur with his own hand. It is said to have been held in most esteem, next to the Prayer-book.

^b The xith. edition was, after the dreary interval of the 18th century, reprinted at Oxford in 1838.

^b Preface p. lxxxi.

In a list which he drew up of the Agreements and Differences^c between the Roman Catholics and the Church of England, he set down, among the agreements, "the public or private absolution of penitent sinners."

Even to teach the *necessity* of Confession was not condemned then. A preacher, named Adams, having preached that "^da special confession unto a priest (actually, where time or opportunity presents itself, or otherwise in explicit intention and resolution) of all our sins committed after baptism, so far forth as we do remember, is necessary unto salvation; so that, according to the ordinance or revealed means appointed by Christ, there can be no salvation without the aforesaid confession," the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge prepared a recantation. Upon Adams' refusal to accept it, the proposition that he should be required to sign it, was rejected by a majority of "eight of the heads of the University against five,"—Cosin being one of the eight^e.

The ground ascribed to Cosin, if true^f, would be remarkable, that the Church of England in the thirty-nine Articles, where it condemned the opinions and points of Popery that he thought Mr. Adams and others are bound also to con-

^c Originally printed, from a copy which Bp. Cosin gave to Hicke in an Appendix to "several letters which passed between Dr. G. Hicke and a Popish priest," Paper iv.; afterwards at the end of Dr. Bull's "Corruptions of the Church of Rome," and in Bp. Cosin's Works, Agreement No. 6. Vol. iv. 336.

^d As quoted in the recantation prepared for him. Collier Eccles. Hist. viii. 121.

^e Collier, Eccel. Hist. viii. 120—122. Collier quotes Rushworth's Hist. Collection P. ii. p. 1378. &c. as the authority for the statement, that the whole proceedings of this affair were sent up "to Abp. Laud, and that the account was transmitted to him by Dr. Cosin."

^f "State papers" quoted in the Church Review Feb. 2. 1867. Church and the world. 2nd Series p. 222.

demn, did not yet condemn the opinion that some men had of the necessity of special confession, and that the Book of Common Prayer seemed rather to give a man liberty to be of that opinion than to condemn him for it, where it says, "If a man cannot quiet himself &c."

But remarkable also was the recantation prepared for him, which, while requiring him to acknowledge, that confession to God sufficed, yet proposed to him to acknowledge also, "in the case of a troubled or doubtful conscience, I do conform my opinion unto the direction of our Church, which in her Liturgy doth *exhort* and *require* those whose consciences are troubled with any weighty matter, to a special confession; so that they who cannot quiet their own consciences are to repair &c."

xiii. The private practice of Archbishop LAUD in his visitation of the sick we know from his book of "private devotions." In them he puts down in Latin under the head, "Visitation of the sick," heads of questions which he would ask the sick man:

"^h Dost thou confess—

"1. That thou hast not lived as well as thou oughtest, yea, that thou hast lived ill, and hast sinned often and gravely?

"2. Is there any sin beyond or above the rest? or are there any sins which weigh upon thy conscience, so that thou hast need of the benefit of special absolution?

"3. Hast thou any scruple concerning the matters of faith and religion?" with other questions leading a sick man to repentance.

His public defence of his faith appears in his trial for

^s in Collier l.c.

^h Private Devotions, pp. 187, 188. ed. 1838. These Devotions were published about 19 years after his Martyrdom, with the Imprimatur of Archbishop Sheldon, and Vice-Chancellor Fell, from the original MS. in the archives of S. John's college.

his life, when one of the charges, founded on the Scotch Canon, was, "that he went about to establish auricular confession and popish absolution." The Canon which had been sent for the revision of himself and Bishop Juxon and so had the approbation of both, was formed on our Canon of 1603. It ran:

"ⁱAlbeit Sacramental confession and Absolution have been in some places very much abused, yet if any of the people be grieved in mind for any delict or offence committed, and for the unburdening of his conscience, confess the same to the bishop or presbyter; they shall, as they are bound, minister to the person so confessing all spiritual consolations out of the Word of God; and shall not deny him the benefit of Absolution, after the manner which is prescribed in the Visitation of the sick, if the party shew himself truly penitent, and humbly desire to be absolved. And he shall not make known or reveal what hath been opened to him in confession at any time, or to any person whatsoever, except the crime be such as by the laws of the realm his own life may be called in question for concealing the same."

His answer is, "For the matter of the Canon, if here be anything to establish 'Popish confession or absolution,' I humbly submit it to the learned of the Reformed Churches through Christendom: all men (for ought I yet know) allowing 'confession' and 'absolution' as most *useful* for the good of Christians, and condemning only the binding of all men to confess all sins, upon absolute danger of salvation. And this indeed some call *carnificinam conscientiae*, 'the rack or torturing of the conscience;' but

¹ Hist. of the troubles and trials of Abp. Laud. Works iii. p. 331. Ang. Cath. Lib.

impose no other necessity of confessing than the weight of their own conscience shall lay upon them; and no other enforcement to receive absolution, than their Christian care to ease their own conscience shall lead them unto: and in that way Calvin commends confession exceedingly; and, if you mark it, you shall find that our Saviour Christ, Who gives the priest full power of the keys 'to bind and loose;' that is, to receive confession, and to absolve or not absolve, as he sees cause in the delinquent: yet you shall not find any command of His to enforce men to come to the priest to receive this benefit. It is enough that He hath left power in the ministry of the Church to give penitent Christians this ease, safety, and comfort, if they will receive it, when they need. If they need, and will not come; or if they need, and will not believe they do so, let them bear their own burden."

xiv. The opinion of the laity in Laud's time, is expressed by LORD WENTWORTH, afterwards LORD STRAFFORD.

"There is something further touching Confession in these Canons than are in those of England, and in my poor judgement much to the better. For howbeit auricular confession to the parish priest is not allowed as a necessary duty to be imposed upon the conscience, yet did I never hear any but commend the free and voluntary practice of it to such a worthy and holy person as should be thought fit to communicate with, in so serious and important a business."

xv. I cannot quote CHILLINGWORTH, as a representative of the Church of England. I fear that he died an Arian. It is, however, not a little remarkable that he accepted the

¹ Strafforde Letters, Vol. ii. p. 295.

writings of the best times of the Primitive Church, "as the safest interpreter of Scripture." For in that case he would not be far from the rule of Vincent of Lerins, the "quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus." But now those who have ever in their mouths his and their favourite maxim, "The Bible and the Bible only the religion of Protestants," will do well to consider, what he derived purely from Holy Scripture, where those, so hot against us, find nothing. The author of "The religion of Protestants a safe way to salvation," in his Sermon makes this appeal,

"^kThis truth being so evident in Scripture and in the writings of the ancient best times of the Primitive Church, the safest interpreters of Scripture, I make no question, but there will not be found one person amongst you, who, when he shall be in a calm impartial disposition, will offer to deny it. For, I beseech you, give yourselves leave impartially to examine your own thoughts:

"Can any man be so unreasonable as once to imagine with himself, that when our Saviour, after His resurrection, having received (as Himself saith) all power in heaven and earth, having led captivity captive, came then to bestow gifts upon men; when He, I say, in so solemn a manner (having first breathed upon His disciples, thereby conveying and insinuating the Holy Ghost into their hearts,) renewed unto them, or rather confirmed and sealed unto them, that glorious commission, which, before, He had given to Peter, sustaining, as it were, the person of the whole Church, whereby He delegated to them an authority of binding and loosing sins upon earth, with a promise that the proceedings in the court of heaven should be directed and regulated by theirs on earth; can any

^k Nine Sermons on special and eminent occasions, Sermon vii. Works pp. 83, 84.

gifts ; indiscreet zeal of some against confession. cvii

man, I say, think so unworthily of our Saviour, as to esteem these words of His for no better than compliment ? for nothing but Court holy water ?

“ Yet so impudent have our adversaries of Rome been in their dealings with us, that they have dared to lay to our charge, as if we had so mean a conceit of our Saviour’s gift of the Keys ; taking advantage indeed from the unwary expressions of some particular Divines, who, out of too forward a zeal against the church of Rome, have bended their staff too much the contrary way ; and instead of taking away that intolerable burden of a sacramental, necessary, universal confession, have seemed to void and frustrate all use and exercise of the Keys.

“ Since Christ, for your benefit and comfort, hath given such authority to His ministers, upon your unfeigned repentance and contrition to absolve and release you from your sins ; why should I doubt, or be unwilling to exhort and persuade you to make your advantage of this gracious promise of our Saviour’s ? Why should I envy you the participation of so heavenly a blessing ? Truly if I should deal thus with you, I should prove myself a malicious, unchristian-like, malignant preacher ; I should, wickedly and unjustly, against my own conscience, seek to defraud you of those glorious blessings which our Saviour hath intended for you.

“ Therefore, in obedience to His gracious will, and as I am warranted, and even enjoined, by my holy mother the Church of England expressly, in the Book of Common Prayer, in the rubric of Visiting the Sick, (which doctrine this Church hath likewise embraced so far,) I beseech you, that by your practice and use, you will not suffer that Commission, which Christ hath given to His Ministers,

to be a vain form of words, without any sense under them ; to be an antiquated expired Commission, of no use nor validity in these days ; but whensoever you find yourselves charged and oppressed, especially with such crimes as they call "*Peccata vastantia conscientiam*," such as do lay waste and depopulate the conscience, that you would have recourse to your spiritual physician, and freely disclose the nature and malignancy of your disease, that he may be able, as the cause shall require, to proportion a remedy, either to search it with corrosives, or comfort and temper it with oil. And come not to him only with such a mind as you would go to a learned man experienced in the Scriptures, as one that can speak comfortable, quieting words to you, but as to one that hath authority delegated to him from God Himself, to absolve and acquit you of your sins. If you shall do this, assure your souls, that the understanding of man is not able to conceive that transport and excess of joy and comfort, which shall accrue to that man's heart, that is persuaded that he hath been made partaker of this blessing orderly and legally according as our Saviour Christ hath prescribed."

xvi. BISHOP SANDERSON was originally a *Sublapsarian*, (a *Supralapsarian* he could never be^m). He was one of the Commissioners at the last review of the Prayer-book. He himself received Absolution from his chaplain a day before his deathⁿ.

The case put to him was as to the bindingness of a vow of two persons, each married to another, to each other, that, whichever should first be freed from the bond of

^m Dr. Pierce's letter appended to Walton's life p. 366.

ⁿ Walton's Lives p. 363.

Bp. Sanderson prescribes it in an aggravated case. cix

matrimony, should wait for the other, until the other also should be freed. The case related to the lady, whose husband was deceased. Bp. Sanderson gives his opinion, that the promise was null *ab initio*, and among other wise advice, recommends that the lady, who had made the sinful promise, should first be led to true contrition of heart and then to confession. There had (it is stated) been no act of sin. The confession then related to the promise, as being sin.

“^o Secondly, that having thus humbled herself before God by inward contrition, she also make an outward free confession of her said sins to him, to whom God hath delegated a ministerial power to remit sins, that she may receive comfort and absolution from his mouth; I mean the priest.”

And having suggested first that the confession should be made to the Bishop of the Diocese, or, “however, to a man of approved wisdom and zeal as shall be both compassionate and secret,” he adds, “wherein the more freely she shall make confession of her said sins, and the more cheerfully she shall subject herself to perform such further acts, whether of humiliation or charity, as the bishop or priest shall advise to be done, in testimony of her unfeigned repentance, the more sound comfort undoubtedly will the sentence of absolution bring unto the soul.”

xvii. DR. HAMMOND: I forget the wonted title of honour which he had in the mouths of men; but it was one, which implied confidence in him. He says;

“‘^p Shall be forgiven him’. If ‘the Lord’ were the antecedent, it must have been in the active voice, ‘He shall remit

^o Eleven cases determined. Case viii. point v. n. 13. T. v. 99. ed. Jacobson.

^p On S. James v. 16.

cx *Hammond: absolution, pledge of God's forgiveness.*

them.' And this in all probability it would have been, if it had been a promise of God's pardon or remission; for then, as it was said, 'the Lord shall raise him up,' so would it commodiously have been added, 'if he have committed sins,' 'He,' that is, the 'Lord will remit them.' By this impersonal form therefore somewhat else seems to be meant besides the Lord's remission, and then that, from the precedent mention of the Elders of the Church, will be concluded to be the absolution of the Church in the hands of the elders thereof, the Bishops, [of which see Note on John xx. 23.] This is of two sorts; first a release of the offender from the public censures of the Church, Excommunication, &c. (inflicted on scandalous offenders upon public cognizance of their faults) upon repentance restoring such to their communion again: secondly, more private, in case of any wasting sin more privately committed, and in confession revealed to the spiritual person; in which case, upon faithful promise of reformation and obedience to spiritual advice and direction (upon recovery to health), the Elder may and ought to give the sick person the peace of the Church and the benefit of Absolution. And that being done by him Ministerially, and *pro officio* and *clave non errante*, as it brings the blessing and prayers of the Church along with it, so it may reasonably tend to the quieting of the conscience, and avoiding all scruple and doubtfulness (as our Church affirms in the Exhortation before the Communion) and be a means of obtaining a release from the disease, if God see fit, or a pawn and pledge of remission in heaven."

"To which purpose it is certain, that as Repentance, if it be sincere, comprehends confession to God, and if the penitent desire to approve the sincerity of it to the spiritual person, and obtain Absolution from him, it is neces-

sary that he make at least a general confession, and such as shall not hide any sort of his guilts from him; as we read at John Baptist's Baptism, Matt. iii. 6, and in the story Matt. xix. 18, where the Greek Fathers and Scholiasts agree, 'Every faithful man ought to tell his offences, and to renounce and disclaim them.'

xviii. BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR, A. D. 1659^o in a book which to this day is still one of the most popular of our religious books, says,

["Every true penitent is obliged to confess his sins, and to humble himself before God for ever. Confession of sins hath a special promise.—In all which circumstances, because we may very much be helped, if we take in the assistance of a spiritual guide, therefore the Church of God in all ages hath commended, and in most ages enjoined, that we confess our sins and discover the state and condition of our souls to such a person, whom we or our superiors judge fit to help us in such needs. For so, if we confess our sins one to another, as S. James advises, we shall obtain the prayers of the holy man whom God and the Church have appointed solemnly to pray for us; and when he knows our needs, he can best minister comfort or reproof, oil or caustics; he can more particularly recommend your state to God; he can determine your cases of conscience, and judge better for you than you do for yourself; and the shame of opening such ulcers may restrain your forwardness to contract them; and all these circumstances of advantage will do very much towards the forgiveness. And this course was taken by the new converts in the days of the Apostles. 'For many that

^o Holy Living. Works T. iv. p. 258, 259. ed. Heber.

believed came and confessed and shewed their deeds.' And it were well, if this duty were practised prudently and innocently in order to public discipline, or private comfort and instruction; but that it be done to God is a duty, not directly for itself, but for its adjuncts, and the duties that go with it, or before it, or after it: which duties, because they are all to be helped and guided by our pastors and curates of souls, he is careful of his eternal interest that will not lose the advantage of using a private guide and judge."

"^r Let the minister of religion be sent to, not only against the agony of death, but be advised with in the whole conduct of the sickness. . . . When the man is deadly sick, he cannot be called to confess his sins, and he is not able to remember them.

"S. James advises that when a man is sick, he should send for the elders. Whether they be many or few that are sent to the sick person, let the curate of the parish, or his own confessor, be amongst them; i. e. let him not be wholly advised by strangers, who know not his particular necessities; but he that is the ordinary judge cannot safely be passed by in his extraordinary necessity, which, in so great portions, depends upon his whole life past, and it is matter of suspicion, when we decline his judgement, that knows us best, and with whom we formerly did converse, either by choice or by law, by private election or public constitution.

"^s Confess your sins often, hear the word of God, make religion the business of your life, your study and chiefest

^r Holy Dying c. v. s. 2. 1. Works iv. 506, 507. Heber.

^s Golden Grove, Agenda. n. 32. Works T. xv. p. 40. Heber.

care, and be sure that in all things a spiritual guide take you by the hand."

In a controversial work [†], while arguing against the absolute necessity of Confession, he not only asserts its acceptance by the Church of England, but attests its actual use.

"When S. James exhorts all Christians to confess their sins one to another, certainly it is more agreeable to all spiritual ends, that this be done rather to the curates of souls than to the ordinary brethren. The church of England is no way engaged against it, but advises it, and practises it."

Again, he distinguishes, "There is a pardon which God only gives. He is the injured and offended person, and He alone can remit of His own right. But yet in this pardon the Church doth co-operate by her ministry."

In his treatise on The doctrine of Repentance, Bishop Taylor argues strongly that confession to a priest is not a necessary duty, but argues also that there might be a relative necessity.

"^{*} Confession to a priest, the minister of pardon and reconciliation, the curate of souls and the guide for consciences, is of so great use and benefit, to all that are heavy laden with their sins, that they who carelessly and causelessly neglect it are neither lovers of the peace of consciences, nor are careful for the advantages of their souls. For the publication of our sins to the minister of holy things, said Basil, 'is just like the manifestation of the diseases of our body to the physician:' for God hath

[†] Dissuasive against Popery B. i. s. xi. n. 2. "Auricular confession imposed without authority from God." Works vi. 504. ed. Eden.

^{*} Ib. p. 518. no. 4.

^{*} Practice of Repentance sect. iv. of confession n. 43. Works ix. pp. 250, 251. Heber.

appointed them as spiritual physicians, 'to heal sinners by the antidote of repentance,' said the fathers in the first Roman Council under Simplicius. . . . There are many cases of conscience, which the penitent cannot determine, many necessities which he does not perceive, many duties which he omits, many abatements of duty which he ignorantly or presumptuously does make ; much partiality in the determination of his own interests ; and to build up a soul requires so much wisdom, so much severity, so many arts, such caution and observance, such variety of notices, great learning, great prudence, great piety ; that as all ministers are not worthy of that charge and secret employment, and conduct of others in the more mysterious and difficult parts of religion ; so it is certain, there are not many of the people that can worthily and sufficiently do it themselves ; and therefore, although we are not to tell a lie for a good end, and that it cannot be said that God hath by an express law required it, or that it is necessary in the nature of things ; yet to some persons it hath put on so many degrees of charity and prudence, and is apt to minister to their superinduced needs, that although it is not a necessary obedience, yet it is a necessary charity ; it is not necessary in respect of a positive express commandment, yet it is in order to certain ends, which cannot be so well provided for by any other instrument ; it hath not in it an absolute, but it may have a relative and a superinduced necessity."

But further, Bp. J. Taylor, in a section, "The former doctrine reduced to practice" gives suggestions, how to confess to man ; and some of these appear to me of a sort, that they could hardly occur to any one, unless he had experience himself in hearing confessions, or were using the

writings of those who had. Thus he directs those who "confess to man" to "tell our sad story, just as it was in its acting, excepting where the manner of it, and its nature or circumstances, require a veil; and then the sin must not be concealed, nor yet so represented as to keep the first immodesty alive in him that acted it, or to become a new temptation in him that hears it. But this last caution is only of use in our confessions to the minister of holy things."

Then not to implicate any other, as an accomplice, in our confession.

"All our confessions must be accusations of ourselves, and not of others. If we confess to men, then to name another, or by any way to signify or reveal him, is a direct defamation; but unless the naming of the sin do, of itself, declare the assisting party, it is at no hand to be done, or to be inquired into: but if a man hath committed incest, and there is but one person in the world with whom he could commit it; in this case, the confessing his sin does accuse another; but then such a guide of souls is to be chosen, to whom that person is not known; but if, by this or some other expedient, the fame of others be not secured, it is best to confess that thing to God only."

Then as to the mode of confessing grave habitual sins.

"But if the penitent person hath been an habitual sinner, in his confession he is to take care, that the minister of religion understand the degrees of his wickedness, the time of his abode in sin, the greatness of his desires, the frequency of his acting them, not told by numbers, but by general significations of the time, and particular significa-

⁷ Of Eccles. Penance, Sect. viii. n. 101. T. ix. 293. Heber.

⁸ Ib. n. 102,

^a n. 109. pp. 298, 299.

tions of the earnestness of his choice. For this transaction being wholly to the benefit and comfort of his soul, the good man that ministers, must have as perfect moral accounts as he can; but he is not to be reckoned withal by natural numbers and measures, save only so far as they may declare the violence of desires, and the pleasures and choice of the sin. The purpose of this advice is this; that since the transaction of this affair is for counsel and comfort, in order to pardon and the perfections of repentance,—there should be no scruple in the particular circumstances of it, but that it be done heartily and wisely: that is, so as may best serve the ends to which it is designed.”

There is also a remarkable suggestion with regard to the exception in our Canon 103, that if a sin be of such sort, that the seal of confession would not be kept, it should not be confessed at all. The exception regarded High Treason. Bp. Taylor accounted rightly “the seal” of such moment, that confession to man should rather be foregone than that the seal should be violated. The difficulty might have been met in another way: for Canon 103 is only permissive, and confessors would rightly risk their lives rather than break the seal. But I think the exception would not have occurred to one who had not Confession, as a living system, before him.

“^b If the man have committed a great sin, it is a high prudence and an excellent instance of his repentance, that he confess it, declaring the kind of it, if it be of that nature, that the spiritual man *may* conceal it. But if, upon any other account, he be bound to reveal every notice of the fact, let him transact that affair wholly between God and his own soul.”

^b l.c. § 107. pp. 296, 297.

Else he had seen souls, which “^c have committed some secret facts, of shame and horror, at the remembrance of which they are amazed, of the pardon of which they have no sign, for the expiation of which they use no instrument,—and their sorrow is not holy but very great, and they know not what to do, because they will not ask. I have observed some such: and the only remedy, that was fit to be prescribed to such persons, was to reveal their sin to a spiritual man, and by him to be put into such a state of remedy and comfort, as is proper for their condition. It is certain that many persons have perished for want of counsel and comfort which were ready for them, if they would have confessed their sin; for ‘he that concealeth his sin,’ saith Solomon, ‘he shall not be counselled.’”

Then as to the office of “shame” in confession, he writes, as one scarcely could who did not know it.

“^d Let no man think it a shame to confess his sins; or if he does, yet let not that shame deter him from it. There is indeed a shame in confession, because nakedness is discovered; but there is also a glory in it, because there is a cure too; there is repentance and amendment. . . . The shame in confession is a great mortification of the man, and highly punitive of the sin, and such that, unless it hinders the duty, is not to be directly reprovèd; but it must be taken care of, that it be a shame only for the sin, which by how much greater it is, by so much the more earnestly the man ought to fly to all the means of remedy and instruments of expiation:—and then the greater the shame is, which the sinner suffers,—the more excellent is the repentance, which suffers so much for the extinction of his sin. But, at no hand, let the shame affright the duty; but let it be remembered, that this confession is

^c Ib. p. 297.

^d § 104 pp. 294, 296.

but the memory of the shame, which began, when the sin was acted,—and abode but as a handmaid of the guilt, and goes away with it: confession of sins opens them to man, but draws a veil before them, that God will the less behold them. . . . If a man be impatient of the shame here, when it is revealed but to one man, who is also, by all the ties of religion, and by common honesty, obliged to conceal them; . . . the man will be no gainer by refusing to confess, when he shall remember, that sins unconfessed are most commonly unpardoned; and unpardoned sins will be made public before all angels and all the wise and good men of the world, when their shame shall have nothing to make it tolerable.”

His advice also how to teach any to bear the shame, seems that of one, who had carefully watched the fluttering pulse of the penitent.

“• When a penitent confesses his sin, the holy man that ministers to his repentance and hears his confession must not, without great cause, lessen the shame of the repenting man; he must directly encourage the duty, but not add confidence to the sinner. For whatsoever directly lessens the shame, lessens also the hatred of sin, and his future caution. . . . But with the shame, the minister of religion is to do, as he is to do with the man’s sorrow; so long as it is a good instrument of repentance, so long is it to be permitted and assisted, but when it becomes irregular, or disposed to evil events, it is to be taken off. And so must the shame of the penitent man, when there is danger, lest the man be swallowed up by too much sorrow and shame, or when it is perceived, that the shame alone is a hindrance to the duty. In these cases, if the

penitent man can be persuaded, directly and by choice, for ends of piety and religion, to suffer the shame, then let his spirit be supported by other means; but if he cannot, let there be such a confidence wrought in him, which is derived from the circumstances of the person, or the universal calamity and iniquity of man, or the example of great sinners like himself, that have willingly undergone the yoke of the Lord, or from consideration of the divine mercies, or from the easiness and advantages of the duty; but let nothing be offered to lessen the hatred or the greatness of the sin; lest a temptation to sin hereafter be sowed in the furrows of the present repentance."

Then as to the sins to be confessed, he advises, not only to confess with precision all the heavy sins, but if one of blameless life confesses sins of infirmity, that he should confess whatever characterises them and their frequency, avoiding what are mere worries.

— "He that confesseth his sins to the minister of religion, must be sure to express all the great lines of his folly and calamity; that is, all that, by which he may make a competent judgement of the state of his soul. Now if the man be of a good life, and yet, in his tendency to perfection, is willing to pass under the method and discipline of greater sinners, there is no advice to be given to him, but that he do not curiously tell those lesser irregularities, which vex his peace, rather than discompose his conscience; but what is most remarkable in his infirmities, or the whole state and the greatest marks and instances, and returns of them, he ought to signify; for else he can serve no prudent end in his confession."

Bp. Taylor closes the subject with earnest words, re-

' Ib p. 296.

cxx Bp. Taylor; blessing of confn. where it can be had.

commending confession as a preparation for Holy Communion.

“§ It is a very pious preparation for the holy Sacrament, that we confess our sins to the minister of religion; for since it is necessary, that a man be examined, and a self-examination was prescribed to the Corinthians in the time of their lapsed discipline, and they must, in destitution of a public minister, do it themselves (but this is in case only of such necessity); the other is better; that is, it is of better order and more advantage, that this part of repentance and holy preparation be performed under the conduct of a spiritual guide. And the reason is pressing. For since it is life or death, that is there administered, and the great dispensation of the keys is in that ministry, —it were very well if he that ministers, did know whether the person presented were fit to communicate or no: and if he be not, it is charity to reject him, and charity to assist him that he may be fitted. There are many sad contingencies in the constitution of ecclesiastical affairs, in which every man that needs this help, and would fain make use of it, cannot; but when he can meet with the blessing, it were well, it were more frequently used, and more readily entertained. I end these advices with the words of Origen: ‘He has no pardon, who knows his sin, and confesses it not: but we must confess always, not that the sin always remains, but that for an old sin an unwearied confession is useful and profitable.’ But this is to be understood of a general accusation, or of a confession to God. For in confessions to men, there is no other usefulness of repeating our confessions, excepting where such repetition does aggravate the fault of relapsing and

ingratitude, in case the man returns to those sins, for which, he hoped, that, before, he did receive a pardon.”

xix. “The Guide for the penitent” (probably BP. BRIAN DUPPA’s) was as popular as ‘the Golden Grove,’ and since Bp. Jeremy Taylor’s decease, A. D. 1667, has been always united with it. It was at one time printed as an integral part of the work^h. In it there is the following advice concerning Confessionⁱ.

“I. Besides this examination of your conscience, which may be done in secret between God and your own soul, there is great use of holy confession ; which, though it be not generally, in all cases, and peremptorily commanded, as if without it no salvation could possibly be had ; yet you are advised by the Church, under whose discipline you live, that before you are to receive the holy Sacrament, or when you are visited with any dangerous sickness, if you find any one particular sin, or more, that lies heavy upon you, to disburden yourself of it into the bosom of your confessor, who not only stands between God and you, to pray for you, but hath the power of the keys committed to him, upon your true repentance to absolve you in Christ’s Name from those sins which you have confessed to him.

“II. You are to remember, that you bring along with you to confession, not only unfeigned sorrow and remorse of conscience for sins past, but settled resolutions for the time to come, never to offend in the same kind again ; for without this, confession is but a mere pageant ; and rather a mockery of God than any effectual means to reconcile you to Him.

^h See the writer’s notice in the Edition of 1843.

ⁱ Subjoined to “the Golden Grove,” pp. 158—161. ed. 1843.

cxxii Bp. Duppa, frequency of conf. depends on y^e need.

“ III. That having made choice of such a confessor, who is every way qualified that you may trust your soul with him, you are advised plainly and sincerely to open your heart to him; and that laying aside all consideration of any personal weakness in him, you are to look upon him only, as he is a trustee from God and commissioned by Him, as His ministerial deputy, to hear, and judge, and absolve you.

“ IV. That the manner of your confession be in an humble posture on your knees, as being made to God rather than man. And for the matter of it, let it be severe and serious; but yet so as it may be without any inordinate anxiety and unnecessary scruples, which serve only to entangle the soul; and instead of setting you free, (which is the benefit to be looked for by confession,) perplex you the more.”

“ V. That for the frequency of doing this, you are to consult with your own necessities: and as your physician is not sent for upon every small distemper, which your own care may rectify; so neither are you obliged upon every failing to be over-scrupulous, or to think it a point of necessity presently to confess it; for the confessor cannot be always present, but your God is, to Whom if you apply yourself with prayer and penitence confessing in His ears alone whatever you have done amiss, and steadfastly believing that through the merits of your Saviour they shall never be imputed to you, you may be confident that your absolution is at that time sealed in heaven, but the comfortable declaration of it you are to look for from the priest.”

xx. Of Bp. NICHOLSON it will suffice to extract a few

words of Bp. Bull's Epitaph of him. "Theologus insignis, Episcopus vere primitivus, in concionibus frequens, in scriptis nervosus, legenda scribens, et faciens scribenda; gravitas episcopalis in fronte emicuit ¹."

"¹ And that of this article, 'forgiveness of sins,' we might have the greater security; God hath committed to His ministers the word of reconciliation, to effect which all that He hath left in their power especially tends.

"4. Lastly, to the Priest's hand He hath delivered a Key; and the use of it is for the detention and remission of sins, *Whose sins you remit they are remitted.*"

xxi. DR. PIERCE President of Magdalen, afterwards Dean of Exeter, in a sermon preached before Charles ii. at Whitehall A.D. 1661, mentions current arguments against confession among "other excesses and rational disobediences of our times," "why need we do this or that?" People then argued in the same way against the necessity of going to Church. Preaching on the Purification, he says, that as one instance, he selects the office of confession, because it is amongst Christians a kind of Gospel Purification.

"^m The duty of Confession from the penitent to the Priest hath been commanded by the Church in the purest times of Antiquity; and however misused by the Church of Rome hath been reformed, and not abolished by this of England. But some malcontents there were, who thought our Church not clean enough, unless they might sweep away the pavement; and amongst other things, their stomachs rose against confession. Will not God (say they)

¹ Memoir prefixed to his Catechism p. vi. Ang. Cath. Ed.

¹ A plain but full Exposition of the Catechism collected out of the best Catechists by William, Lord Bishop of Gloucester. pp. 67. 68.

^m Collection of Sermons p. 242. ed. 1671.

be pleased with the acknowledgement of the heart, but must that of the mouth be required also? must we pour out our souls into the ear of the Priest? Or can we not make it in our closet, but must we have it in the Church too? But I would say to such an English or Scottish Naaman no other thing than was said by the Syrian servant. My brother, or, my sister, suppose our Mother the Church of England had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not cheerfully have done it without disputes? How much rather when she saith, wash and be clean? That is, ‘confess and be forgiven.’”

xxii. The devout BISHOP KEN^a had been educated at Winchester, and^o had exhibited in his own person the example of a school-boy dedicating his tender years to the service of God, and lived a virgin life to the end. Having spent five years at the school, he used his joint experience as a boy and as a Fellow of Winchester, when he observed the temptations to which the scholars were exposed, and wrote the “Manual of Prayers for the use of the scholars of Winchester, clergymen, and other devout Christians.” In it, he urges a review of the whole past life in the presence of God, the great Judge, because “^p there be many sins, some of commission, that you may doubt whether you have forgotten, many that you have quite forgot.” Then having given questions upon all the commandments, and upon the 7th, such as would suggest nothing to one ignorant of any sin, yet would reach the guilty, he suggests,

“^q In case, PHILOTHEUS, you do find this examination too difficult for you, or are afraid you shall not rightly perform it, or meet with any scruples, or troubles of

^a Life of Bp. Ken by a layman p. 62. 1851.

^p Manual p. 46. A. 1687.

^o Ib. p. 63.

^q Ib. pp. 54, 55.

conscience, in the practice of it, I then advise you, as the Church does, to go to one of your Superiors in this place, to be your Spiritual Guide, and be not ashamed to unburthen your soul freely to him, that, besides his ghostly counsel, you may receive the benefit of Absolution. For though confession of our sins to God is only matter of duty and absolutely necessary, yet confession to our Spiritual Guide also is, by many devout souls, found to be very advantageous to true repentance."

xxiii. KETTLEWELL provides for the "Guide of souls (or the penitent himself, if the sick man is his own examiner)" "questions for the penitent, whereby to try and discover the safety of their spiritual state" both as to belief and obedience. He recites the duties towards God, ourselves, and our neighbours: (under the duties towards ourselves, there are some careful hints as to the 7th commandment, such as would suggest thoughts to the guilty). Among the "Questions concerning our obedience of these laws" is one, "Is there any particular sin amongst all these which lies heavy, above the rest, upon your conscience, and for which you yet need and desire more particular direction comfort and absolution?"

xxiv. One can hardly name a name, more esteemed and revered or trusted than Bp. PEARSON. His exposition of the Creed has formed the Theological mind of generation after generation of Theologians. We have all been indebted to him. He was selected as one of the Commissioners of the Savoy Conference. He was consulted as a "moderate divine," "about the reception of one who had only received" "ordination after a congregational way."

* Companion for the penitent. Works ii. 348, 351.

He answers, that "since the individual was no priest or presbyter, he consequently has no power to consecrate the elements," but also that he could not give him who consulted him, and who is described as "a person of quality" absolution upon his confession in the hour of death. This, of course, implied an expectation, that he might desire it.

"The unfeigned exercise of religion is undoubtedly, as never more necessary, so never so comfortable, as upon the bed of our sickness, especially upon the approach of death; wherefore the Church hath taken great care that the minister shall attend, and how he shall behave himself in the visitation of the sick for their comfort and advantage. This comfort, I confess, must be taken from you, who are of that persuasion concerning your pastor; for if upon the apprehension of your latter end, you feel your conscience troubled, and being observant of the method prescribed, desire to make a special confession and receive the benefit of absolution, to which end the priest is ordered to use these words: 'By the authority of Christ committed to me, I absolve thee of all thy sin,' you will never acquiesce in the absolution, where you acknowledge no commission, nor can you expect any efficacy which dependeth upon the authority."

XXV. DR. BARROW, entitled in popular opinion, "the learned," is a very measured writer, so much so, that his stateliness gives an appearance of coldness. He has been entitled "the great Barrow," and any how would not be betrayed into any exaggeration. He is writing on the public penance, but he regards absolution, not as a freeing

"Promiscuous ordinations are destructive to the honour and safety of the Church of England, if they should be allowed in it. Written in a letter to a person of quality. A.D. 1668." *Minor Works* T. ii. p. 237. ed. Churton.

from the censures of the Church, but as a restoration to a state of grace.

"2. 'If Christian men, having fallen into sin or failed of duty towards God, do seriously confess their fault, and heartily repent thereof, when the ministers of the Church, in God's Name and for Christ's sake, do declare (or pronounce) to them, so doing or so qualified, the pardon of their sin, and absolve them from it; we need not doubt that their sins are really forgiven, and the pardon expressed in words is effectually dispensed unto them.

"3. Moreover, if persons having committed notorious enormities, adjudged of a deadly and destructive nature, ('sins unto death,' S. John calls them,) inconsistent with the state of grace, and scandalous to the Christian profession, are therefore justly secluded from communion of the Church; when, upon submission to the penances enjoined and satisfactory demonstrations of repentance, they are resumed into the bosom of the Church, we may be assured that (according to the Catholic resolution against the Novatians), supposing the repentance true and real, their sins are remitted, and they are restored to a state of grace.

"^a The Church (to which the public and ordinary dispensations of God's grace, according to the dispositions and conditions which He hath declared to require in order to men's becoming capable thereof, is committed,) hath sufficient warrant to receive such persons into a state of grace and reconciliation with God; so that we need not doubt, but whose sins they shall thus remit, shall in effect (according to our Saviour's word) be remitted; whom they

"'An Exposition of the Creed,' "The Forgiveness of sins." Works vol. v. pp. 495, 496. Clar. Pr. 1818.

^a Ib. pp. 496, 497.

ccxxviii *Bp. Burnet heard confessions habitually.*

shall thus absolve on earth, they shall be absolved in heaven."

"4^x. They remit sins *dispensativè*, by consigning pardon in administration of the sacraments, especially in conferring baptism, whereby, duly administered and undertaken, all sins are washed away, and in the absolving of penitents, wherein grace is exhibited and ratified by imposition of hands, the which S. Paul calls *χαρίζεσθαι*, to bestow grace or favour upon the penitent."

xxvi. Bp. BURNET is certainly not one, whom one would have expected to have been applied to, to hear confessions. Yet he *did* hear them habitually. For, in a letter still extant in answer to another Bishop, who enquired "what absolution he used when persons came to confess to him," and said that he himself "was in the habit of using that in the office for the sick, but wished to know what was Burnet's practice," Burnet said, that "in his opinion, either was proper, but that he himself used that in the office for Holy Communion."

xxvii. SCRIVENER mentions as an error imputed to us, "Private confession is to be taken away." He answers "Not so much as the sectaries say this absolutely;" and in his chapter on repentance,

"^a I cannot find any seriously and positively denying the lawfulness or usefulness of private or auricular confession to the Priest or Minister. Some indeed very ig-

^x Power of the Keys Ib. p. 206.

^y J. D. Chambers Esq., a lawyer of exact mind, says, "I saw in a collection of autographs a letter from Bp. Burnet, signed by him, to another Bishop whose name was not stated," to this effect. Church and the World. 2nd Series p. 393.

^z A course of Divinity. The Entrance. Harpsfield's Obj. 10.

^a Ib. B. i. P. i. c. 38. p. 182.

South ; Ch. of E. advises confn. to the troubled. cxxix

norant, and no less superstitious persons, are offended at the word Auricular, from the common use of it amongst them whose doctrine and practice have corrupted it."

xxviii. DR. SOUTH asks the question; "Does the Church of England hold auricular or private confession to the priest, as an integral part of repentance and necessary condition of absolution? No; the Church of England denies such confession to be necessary, either *necessitate præcepti*, as enjoined by any law or command of God; or *necessitate medii*, as a necessary means of pardon or remission of sins; and consequently rejects it as a snare and a burden, groundlessly and tyrannically imposed upon the Church.

"But so much of private confession as may be of spiritual use for the disburthening of a troubled conscience, unable of itself to master or grapple with its own doubts, by imparting them to some knowing, discreet, spiritual person, for his advice and resolution about them; so much, I confess, the Church of England does approve, advise, and allow of. I say, it does advise it, and that as a sovereign expedient, proper in the nature and reason of the thing, for the satisfaction of persons otherwise unable to satisfy themselves, but by no means does it enjoin it as a duty equally and universally required of all."

xxix. DR. ISHAM'S "Daily Office for the sick" was (to judge from its repeated editions) a popular book of devotions at the close of the 17th century. Dr. Isham urges, that the Church exhorts to special confession in sickness, if their conscience be troubled with any weighty matter; he bids the sick man, if truly penitent, to look upon the priest, who declares the absolution, as speaking from God

* Sermon lxi. T. iv. p. 211. ed. Clar. Press.

† Compiled out of H. S. and the Liturgy, Directions § v. p. 193. A. 1694.

cxix *Isham; many shd confess, who neglect it. Bp. Wilson;*

on the ground of "our Blessed Saviour's own words and promise. (S. John xx. S. Matt. xviii.)"

"If the sick person feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, he is exhorted by the Church to make a special confession of his sins to the minister that visits him; and then having testified his hearty repentance, he is to desire Absolution, and to receive it in the Form of the Church with all possible humility and thankfulness: looking upon the priest that declares it, as speaking from God, Who gave this Authority to His Church and to the pastors of it: '*Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them;*' and '*whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.*' However, since the ministerial power cannot absolve any whom God doth not absolve, the infirm Christian is to remember, that he can have no advantage by this Absolution, but upon the condition of his sound and sincere repentance, and by consequence he is earnestly to frame himself to such a contrition."

He adds, moreover, that, although our Church only presses confession in the case of deeper sin, its apparent mind is that it ought to be used by many who neglect it.

"It is fit also for him to observe, that though our Church presseth particular confession to a Priest, only when the conscience is disquieted with sins of deeper malignity, yet it doth not discountenance the more frequent use of it; and this, too, in so comprehensive a case as to take in great numbers that neglect it."

xxx. BISHOP WILSON's popular title, "the Apostolic," will be a guarantee for the soundness of his teaching.

In his "Instructions for the Clergy" he provides a form

more repentance wd. involve more Absolution. cxxxi

for "Examination of the sick person's conscience"^x, in which there are questions under all the commandments, in no other than Scripture language, yet unveiled. This, however, is not the confession; but only a preparation for it, for he sums up;

"And now I will leave you for a while to God and to your own conscience; beseeching Him to discover to you the charge that is against you; that you may know and confess and bewail and abhor the errors of your life past; that your sins may be done away by His mercy, and your pardon sealed in heaven, before you go hence and be no more seen."

Then he explains the relation of our Lord's office and that which He has committed to us, as "the true way to magnify the power of the keys."

"Our Lord having purchased the forgiveness of sins for all mankind, He hath committed the ministry of reconciliation to us: that, having brought men to repentance, we may, in Christ's name and in the power of Christ, pronounce their pardon."

"And this will be the true way to magnify the power of the Keys, which is so little understood or so much despised; namely to bring as many as possibly we can to repentance, that we may have more frequent occasions of sealing penitents' pardon by our ministry."

Then he advises how to instruct the uninstructed sick thereon.

"And now if the sick person has been so dealt with, as to be truly sensible of his sinful condition, he should then be instructed in the nature and benefit of confession (at

^x *Parochialia*, or Instructions to the Clergy, Works, vii. 65. ed. Keble.

^y *Ib.* p. 68.

^z *Ib.* p. 69.

least of such sins as do trouble his conscience,) and of absolution. For instance, he should be told, that as, under the law of Moses, God made His priests the judges of leprosy, —even so under the Gospel He has given His priests authority to judge of sin, which is the leprosy of the soul. He has given them rules to judge by, with authority to pronounce their pardon, if they find them qualified. For this is their commission from Christ's own mouth, 'Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them.'

Then, once more, he suggests questions to test and elicit real penitence, and so closes this part;

"^a Every Christian, whose life has been in the main unblameable, and whose repentance has been thus particularly examined, and who has given a satisfactory answer to these questions, ought not to leave the world without the benefit of absolution, which he should be earnestly pressed to desire, and exhorted to dispose himself to receive, as the Church has appointed, with all possible humility and thankfulness."

In a series of sermons, "On the Creed put in practice," when he comes to the Article "on the Forgiveness of sins," after a brief exhortation to repentance, he adds,

"^b And if my sins are such as give me great disturbance of mind, I will not only confess them to God, but I will apply to some one of those pastors, whom God has appointed to be the ministers of reconciliation betwixt God and man: to him I will open my case and my grief; I will take his ghostly counsel and directions; and when he judges my repentance to be sincere, according to the rules of the Gospel, I will beg of him to give me absolution. For sure, sure those words of Jesus Christ were not so

^a Ib. p. 70.

^b Serm. xxxvi. Works, ii. 409. ed. Keble.

often repeated to no purpose, 'Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them.' I will therefore faithfully believe, that it will be unto me according to this word."

On S. James v. 15, he presupposes that confession of sins preceded the forgiveness.

"^c *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick: and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, (ἀφεθήσεται αὐτοῦ), he shall be absolved, i.e. upon his confession.*"

In his "Maxims of piety and morality" he sets down as addressed to the Clergy;

"^d [Ad Clerum]. Qualifications of a *good Confessor*.—A blameless life. Of an inviolable secrecy, a sweet behaviour to allure and to comfort sinners. Courage to reprove and prudence to apply fit remedies to troubled consciences, and to let them know that God respects sincerity of heart above all things."

Here again he uses the illustration of the Levitical law as to leprosy, to reconcile God's sole power of forgiveness and man's delegated power of remission.

"^e *Auricular Confession*. 'Tis certainly true, *none can forgive sins but God only*. S. Mark ii. 7. And yet those are not vain words—*Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted*. S. John xx. 23.

"These Scriptures are easily reconciled by this other instance out of these Holy Records—The leper under the law (Lev. xiii. 6) was healed by God only; the Priests alone could pronounce him clean; he had certain rules given him, by which he was to go; if he neglected them, he acted presumptuously.—If he followed them, he had

^c *Sacra Privata*, Works, v. 35, 36 Ib.

^d *Maxims*, n. 52. Works v. p. 532. ed. Keble. ^e Ib. n. 78. Ib. p. 540.

authority to pronounce him clean, and as such he was received into the congregation, a type of heaven. Apply this to the *Ministry of Absolution*. We are to enquire diligently into the motives, steps, signs, fruits of repentance. If we find them to be such as the Gospel requires, we declare them pardoned. If not, we pronounce them unclean and not fit for the Kingdom of heaven.—To His people *being penitent*, of which the Priest is appointed the judge, —by *Gospel rules*, and he would mightily abuse his power, if he should pronounce one penitent, who has been persuaded to tell his faults, without considering seriously how to leave them, and purposing sincerely to do so. And certainly the best way to satisfy one's conscience whether we are truly penitent, is for a while to try, whether we keep up sincerely to our resolutions of forsaking any sin."

xxx. Bishop STEARNE's Treatise of the Visitation of the sick, was, in the memory of some yet living, a part of a book put, by a sort of authority, into our hands in preparation for Holy Orders, "The Clergyman's Instructor." Bp. Stearne, an Irish Bishop, published it in Latin in the last year of the 17th century. It came recommended to us, early in this 19th. It was in the collection of Treatises put into all our hands, as candidates for Holy Orders. In it, he suggests ways and motives, whereby to induce a sick man to confess the sins, which ought to be revealed, that he may be rightly advised, whether he is ashamed to say what he was not ashamed to commit, or that the Confessor would out of malice or culpable levity reveal to others what was confided to him, or might conceive a bad opinion of him. He suggests remedies to these fears, and makes the parish priest give the advice, 'Choose whom you will as Confessor, but out of love I warn you, not to conceal

from him, what unless he knows, you can profit little by his counsel.'

The whole advice occupies eighteen pages in the original Latin.

xxxii. BISHOP HORNE, in a Sermon preached before the University of Oxford¹, after a very careful statement of the relative offices of Christ and the holy Spirit: the Giver and the gifts; distinguishes between the measure of those gifts, as distributed to each: 1stly the Apostolical, or that conferred on the Apostles; 2ndly the Ecclesiastical, or that continued on to their successors by the laying on of hands;

“² The second measure of grace is the ecclesiastical measure, or that which is given to the ordinary ministry for the standing government and continual edification of the Church. This likewise is the gift of Christ, He being the fountain-head of all principality and power, and it is conferred by the Spirit, Who only commissions men to be the representatives of Christ, and to act in His name. . . .

“When Christ, after His resurrection, appointed His Apostles to the work of the ministry, He breathed on them, and said, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost.’ The next words shew, for what purpose the Spirit was there given by His breathing on them: ‘Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained.’ The Apostles afterwards ordained ‘by the laying on of hands,’ as their successors have done, and do to this day, saying, after the example and by the authority of their great Lord and Master, ‘Receive thou the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins thou dost remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins thou dost retain, they are retained.’

Whit-Tuesday, 1757. ² Discourse xviii. on Eph. iv. 7. T. i. p. 342.

“The third measure of the gift of Christ is that” given, he says, “for the personal sanctification of individuals.” Here first in order stands regeneration.

“The regenerate spirit of a Christian, while it is (as S. Peter calls it) a babe in Christ, must be fed with the milk of the Word; when it is more grown in grace, with the strong meat of its salutary doctrines; when it is infirm, it must be strengthened by the comforts of its promises; and when sick, or wounded by sin, it must be recovered and restored by godly counsel and wholesome discipline, *by penance and absolution*, by the medicines of the Word and Sacraments, as duly and properly administered in the Church by the lawfully and regularly appointed delegates and representatives of the Physician of souls.”

“Penance and absolution,” are, in Bp. Horne’s belief, for those who need it, part of the gift of Christ for the personal sanctification of individuals.

xxxiii. BISHOP PHILLPOTTS, it is known, from the legal character of his mind, was one, who would construe any document with strict exactness. Confession to man was, in his early days, although used, exceptional. He, probably, never either made or heard a confession. In speaking then of the supposed disadvantage of frequent confession, he was speaking of that, of which, however acute, he had no *practical* experience. Yet with his well-known precision of mind, while advising the practice, he saw that it was not forbidden by the Church of England, nay that we, the Clergy, could not, if asked, refuse to hear *habitual* confessions:

“Persons may differ as to the expediency of such a

Confession and Absolution; a letter to the Dean of Exeter 1852. p.²⁴, 25.

practice; and for myself, I hesitate not to say that in my judgement, the *habit* of going to confession without some special reason, is likely to produce very grave mischief in many cases—to impair the healthy tone of a Christian conscience, just as constant and unnecessary recourse to medicine weakens the constitution of the body. But this is a matter which the Church leaves open to the discretion of its members, both lay and clerical; and I disclaim the right of interfering with it, beyond saying, as I again say, to my clergy, that I disapprove it^h. After all, however, the clergy have in truth much less liberty in the matter than the laity. They may discourage (as I think our Church plainly discourages), but I do not think they can refuse, the *habitual* application to them to receive confession; and those who discourage it in earnest, will rarely be much troubled.—Speaking generally, however, I believe that there is very little danger, that, in this country and in these times, there will be any excessive tendency to seek the benefit of absolution. *There is much more danger of its not being sought, even when, with God's blessing, it would be most useful*ⁱ. To use an old illustration, the man who in these days^j warns his neighbour against the usurpation of priestly power in England, must be one who would, with equal wisdom, have cried, 'Fire! Fire!' at the Deluge."

Again, Bp. Phillpotts puts the question directly, "^kNow,

^h Again, while continuing to express his opinion, that the Church of England discourages habitual confession, he says in a letter to one who had been accused to him; "As I do not think that the Church of England prohibits your receiving to confession those who seek it as an habitual practice, I do not presume to prohibit your doing so." Letter to Rev. G. R. Prynne p. 43. To myself, on explaining that the *habitual* confessions which I heard in his diocese still had reference to Holy Communion, he expressed himself satisfied.

ⁱ The Italics are the Editor's. ^j A. 1852.

^k Letter &c. p. 14.

is the receiving the secret, auricular (for the words are in this instance of the same import) confession of the sins of the dying penitent, or of one who is withheld from the Lord's Table by fear of his unfitness to present himself—is the receiving of such confession one of the ministrations of Christ's ministers? Our Church says that it is: you, as a high officer in that Church, have again and again declared that you unfeignedly believe it so to be. You must then, on your own principle, joyfully and thankfully acknowledge that Christ is with His minister in receiving such confession, and in pronouncing thereupon the Church's solemn form of absolution: Our Lord Jesus Christ &c."

Again, in answer to the imputation that absolution was "a Popish figment" left by the Reformers, against their better judgement:

"¹ For, after all, the power of forgiving and retaining sin left by our Lord to His Church, or rather exercised by Himself in His Church through His ministers, is one, in which, properly understood, the people are far more interested than the ministers themselves. Yet we commonly hear it assailed as mere priestcraft, a remnant of Popery ('a Popish figment,' is, I believe, the stock description of it in platform oratory), which our Reformers suffered to remain, in condescension to the prejudices of the people, contrary to their own better judgement. How truly this is said, may be seen on reference to the deliberate teaching of the Reformers in the Homily of 'Common Prayer and Sacraments,' where it is expressly said, that *absolution hath the promise of forgiveness of sins*—yet, by the express word of the New Testament, it hath not this promise annexed and tied to the visible sign, which is imposition of hands,

¹ Letter. p. 32.

Abs. hath the promise of forgiveness of sins. cxxxix

and *therefore* (because it hath not a visible sign, though it 'hath the promise of forgiveness of sins') Absolution is no *such* Sacrament, as Baptism and the Lord's Supper are."

Again, in regard to the solution, which supposes the absolution to refer to Ecclesiastical censures :

"^m But I dwell not on the matter of ecclesiastical censure; for it is not that, with which we are immediately, or at least principally concerned. The matter really in question is, the doctrine of our Church respecting Absolution, as it is carried out in one of its highest and most formal acts—the conferring of Holy Orders. For our church ordains Priests (to whom, *as such*, it gives no 'power to inflict or to remove Ecclesiastical Censures') by giving to them our Lord's commission in the words of your text, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the church of God. . . Whose sins *thou dost forgive*, they are forgiven,' &c. And if we could doubt the meaning of the Church in thus applying our Lord's commission to *Priests*, it would be made plain beyond the possibility of cavil, by looking at the manner in which the Priest is authorised and required to exercise his power of 'Order,' in the various duties and offices which the Church has assigned to him. First, having said that 'Almighty God hath given power and commandment &c. . . sins' he proceeds to 'declare and pronounce' that God then 'pardoneth, and absolveth &c.' Again, the priest, before he administers the Holy Communion, invokes God's pardon of those who have acknowledged and bewailed their manifold *sins* before Him. Again, the priest gives or refuses Absolution to those who open their grief to him in secret, making special confession of the *sins* which trouble them

^m Letter pp. 33, 34, 35.

in order to their obtaining the benefit of Absolution at his hands—whether in preparation for the Holy Communion, or at the visitation of them being sick; in the latter case, the priest, having invoked the pardon of our Lord Jesus Christ Who hath left power to His Church to absolve all *sinner*s who truly repent and believe in Him, says ‘By His authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy *sins*, in the Name &c.’ ”

“Such, according to the plain teaching of our Church, is the commission of Priests; such the power given to them—the object of that power is, I repeat, *sins*. To deny, therefore (as you deny), that this Commission confers a power ‘to absolve men from the future penalties of sin,’—and to say (as you say), that it only constitutes ‘judges in spiritual matters, if need be, to inflict or remove Ecclesiastical censures,’ is simply to contradict your Church, speaking not only in its Homily, but in the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal, of which you have again and again solemnly ‘declared your unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained therein.’ ”

Again,—

“^mNow we have seen that a main part of our Lord’s mission relates to the forgiveness of sins. When therefore He declared, ‘that as the Father hath sent’ Him, even so He sends the Apostles, He gave to His apostles His own delegated power of forgiving sins. And when He breathed on them, and said, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost,’ He gave to them from Himself that same Spirit, by Whom the power of forgiveness of sins was in Himself. And therefore having thus conferred upon them the power, He in express terms promised to be with them in the exercise of

^m Letter. p. 29, 30.

it, inasmuch as it is His own power continued in them, and through them to their successors, 'even unto the end of the world' 'Whosoever sins ye remit &c;' they are remitted and retained by Me, not you, by My using you as My ministers, who are to exercise My power not your own, and exercise it in My Name.

"This, which is the plain, direct, grammatical construction of the passage, sufficiently disposes of *the argumentum ad invidiam*, which is so commonly used against the notion that the Christian Minister claims to forgive or retain sins. It is not he, that forgives or retains, but Christ; he only has authority to speak the words of Christ; if therefore he speak not Christ's words, pronounces not according to Christ's judgement, he speaks what is naught, and what he is guilty before God for speaking, in such measure of guilt, as his erring speech has been caused by presumption or negligence, in delivering the sentence of Christ."

Bp. Phillpotts almost ridicules the imputation which has been so rife of late, as if the confessional involved a diseased curiosity as to those sins, which have to be treated with most tenderness, and the greatest delicacy and reserve, consistent with truthfulness:

"^k Here then is a very wide field of doubt and perplexity—less, I believe, in respect to that commandment, which is usually spoken of, as if it were the only, or *the favourite* matter of the confessional—the seventh—than any other, for most of the offences against it are too certain, to admit of any doubt whatever in the mind of an ordinarily informed Christian."

xxxiv. Bp. MOBERLY cautions as to "the practice of *continual* confession to a priest and the craving of *continual*

^k Letter p. 31.

absolution at his hands,—much more the habit of seeking *continual* ‘direction’ (as it is called) of conscience from him.” Of these he says, “I cannot doubt that it has a distinctly enfeebling effect upon the personal strength, with which a Christian ought to walk before God and to order his own steps according to His law.” He does not, however, say, how much he includes under the expressions which he uses, of ‘*continual* confession’ and ‘*continual* absolution.’ The subject of ‘direction’ (of which hereafter) is altogether distinct, and is at most only incidentally connected with confession. But every gift of God committed to man has its perils by reason of human infirmity; and, whether as confessing individually, priests as well as people, one’s sins, or receiving confessions, as priests, we are indebted for any cautions in a case “¹ where disuse [Bp. Moberly adds, ‘and much past corruption’] and the obvious liability of various kinds of danger, and I will add, the scantiness of special and particular directions from authority, embarrass the exercise of a real, and in its own place, a most precious and sacred power.”

But the question, which is now so wildly agitated, is not as to any abuse in the exercise of what Bp. Moberly rightly calls, “a real, most precious, and sacred power,” but as to the power itself or any use of it. And on this Bp. Moberly is distinct;

“^m Those who are in notorious sin, whereby the congregation is offended, are to be repelled from communion, and not re-admitted to it, until restored by due absolution upon repentance; and those who are in such distress of mind from the burthen of secret sin as to feel themselves unfit to communicate, and really, though without the know-

¹ Bampton Lectures Lect. vii. p. 233.

^m Ib. pp. 225—227.

ledge of others, outside for the present of the pale of God's people, are by the ministry of God's Holy Word to receive from the Priest 'the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of their conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.'

"In the time of heavy and dangerous sickness,—in the time when death seems to be impending, when the conscience is likely to be burdened with weighty matters, lightly regarded, perhaps hardly remembered at all, in the days of health and strength; when bodily and mental powers are enfeebled, and the heart is tempted to sink down and despair under the prospect of appearing immediately in the presence of the Most Holy God with all its sins upon it—is the blessed comfort of the solemn confession to God, in the presence of His priest, and the tender administration of God's Holy Word and promise, crowned by the audible words of authorized and express absolution, not to be refused to the afflicted and dying sinner, humbly and heartily desiring it? Oh! let no shrinking from the honest and faithful use of the Divinely-descended powers that came to the Church and to her priests from the holy Words and Breath of Christ, let no base fears of worldly objection or scorn lead a priest of God to grudge to his dying brother the clear, outspoken, ringing words of holy absolution, which the Church has put into his mouth, which the sad sinner humbly and heartily craves, which his faithful, full Confession has earned. Do not mock the dying patient by reminding him that he too is a physician. Do not cheat the broken-hearted penitent by telling him that he is a priest himself. God has provided an express comfort for him in his extremity of distress. God has given to you, *and to none but you*, the very anodyne for his poor

soul's pain. You are cruel, you are faithless, you are untrue to your holy calling and duty, if, out of fear of man, you shrink from using it."

xxxv. I will add one more name, for the undying love and reverence, borne towards him by hearts, whose inner life, by the grace of God, he deepened; JOHN KEBLE.

He wrote, in heaviness of heart, as a parish-priest, "We go on working in the dark, and in the dark it will be, until the rule of systematic confession is received in our Church. . . . They do not, they cannot, unless they were tried as we are, form an adequate notion, how absolutely we are in our parishes like people whose lantern has blown out, and who are feeling their way, and continually stepping in puddles and splotches of mud, which they think are dry stones."

It was to him a ground of recommendation of a Curate, that one had been dismissed from a London Curacy by the Bishop, for preaching a sermon on confession. "I think," he says, "if I wanted a Curate, I should inquire about him, not of course make him an offer at once, but try to ascertain through others, whether he was a good and discreet man, and if he were, give him a preference. Whoever can discreetly and effectually bring in confession, will do, I should think, one of the best things for this poor Church, as she is at present."

To one who had relapsed into deadly sin he expresses his thankfulness, that he had "had the heart to confess" and expresses his conviction that "*regular confession*" (the italics are J. K.'s) would be his best help;

* Letter dated, on the Purification 1842. Coleridge, Memoir of John Keble p. 302. Also in Wilson's Selection from his letters, Lett. xix.

° Letter xx. p. 41. ed. Wilson.

“^p Indeed I am very sorry for you, but I must not lose a moment in beseeching you not to despair, but to go on courageously in the way of penitence, on which, by God’s grace, you have entered. I feel sure that as the evil spirit must have rejoiced in your fall (no doubt he was especially busy with you, those who are making any kind of effort in the way of goodness must always expect to find him so), so the good Angels rejoiced, and I trust, are still rejoicing, at your having the heart to confess.”

“I am persuaded that in most cases (and yours seems no exception,) *regular* confession, and not occasional only, will be found the best help, by way both of precaution and remedy. It was partly with this view that I mentioned to you Mr. ———, whom I suppose to be a most discreet and charitable director. But I hope you will understand that I am quite at your service, should you prefer ‘opening your grief’ to me, Providence having somehow brought us together.”

And then, having given hints how “to prepare for what is called ‘general confession,’” he adds, “Then when a good opportunity comes, you may pour it all out into your loving Lord’s ear, through some one of His unworthy Priests, and be by Him, through the Priest’s mouth, so fully absolved, that the sins, if not returned to, shall be no more mentioned unto you, and you may with humble confidence communicate as often as ever you can reverently draw near.

“^q Pray consider this, and with earnest prayer. I cannot but hope that courage will be given you to try this remedy, bitter as it must be, and to persevere in it. You need not have to wait long, as, if you prefer Mr. ——— (which,

^p Ib. xlvii. p. 95, 96.

^q Ib. p. 97.

on many accounts, I should be glad of), you might go to him at any time. The practice once begun, I trust in His great goodness, would go on, and do you great good. The general confession need not be repeated, though you changed your director, unless you wished it.

“May He, Who can, forgive and bless you.”

And in another letter; “be not too scrupulous in setting down things, nor yet too general, but take some one or more as specimens in any kind which may have become habitual, and describe the frequency of the habit, if you can, by the number of sins in a given time; and the degree, by some aggravating circumstances, such as your conscience most reproaches you for, and He Who is merciful will accept it, if fairly so intended, for a full confession. What you write is best written in some kind of cypher or abbreviation, lest it be lost and do harm. Do it as a religious exercise, as in God’s presence, and a good deal on your knees. Being thus set down as you may remember it, it will save you the trouble of recollection when you come to confess, and you will be more at leisure for pure contrition.

“On the whole matter you will find good directions in Bishop Taylor’s ‘Holy Dying,’ and ‘Golden Grove;’ and also in Kettlewell’s ‘Companion to the Penitent.’

“May God and all good Angels be with you in the good work.”

And at the close of an earnest letter “to the parent of an illegitimate child,”

“If, according to our Saviour’s and the Church’s direction, you make use of me or any other clergyman to advise you in the difficult work of steady repentance, you

• Letter xlviii. p. 98.

• Letter lxxiv. p. 140.

are aware, of course, that any clergyman is bound to keep people's secrets so applying to him."

To a lady, at a distance, wishing to write some account of her faults[†];

"^u About confessing again, you must judge for yourself. Advice may of course be written, but Absolution must be given in person. We can easily manage it, if you wish."

Having answered the criticisms of Dr. Perowne as regards myself personally, I ought to say, that with the exception of his declamations against frequent confession, of which probably he practically knows nothing, (for as Bp. Phillpotts remarked with his usual acuteness, "those who discourage frequent confession in earnest, will rarely be much troubled") he acknowledges all, for which I have myself ever contended.

Dr. Perowne writes against those who hear confessions rather than against confession itself. He accuses unjustly those who hear them, of "trying as far as possible to assimilate the Church of England to the Church of Rome." "This," he says, "has been avowed again and again by the leaders of the movement themselves." Whom he means by those leaders, I know not, his only instance being our friend Hurrell Froude, who thought the Reformation ill-managed, without denying that a reformation was needed. The Church of England has never professed to be infallible. Bp. Ridley appealed to his former chaplain that he had "misliked some things," "sudden changes without substantial and necessary cause^v." We may acquiesce thankfully in the results, as shewn in our Prayer-book, as

[†] i. e. if the same, to whom Letter lxxxvi. p. 159 was written.

^u Letter lxxxix. p. 164.

^v Fathers of the Eng. Ch. iv. 233.

a whole ; and yet wish that the vine had not been shaken so violently. Every body wishes that some things had been done otherwise, though in opposite directions.

The words of the pious George Herbert have long been in the mouths of those who loved the Church of England, without offence to others :

“^w The second temple could not reach the first ;
And the first Reformation never durst
Compare with ancient times and purer years,
But in the Jews and us deserveth tears.”

The devout Bishop Andrewes prayed continually,

“^x for the British Church,
the supply of what is wanting in it,
the strengthening of what remains in it.”

His prayers have been repeated without rebuke by many thousand hearts and voices.

“^y But no part of the movement,” (Dr. Perowne preaches to his congregation at Llandaff) “^z has been regarded with more suspicion and aversion (“and I think justly” he adds) than the attempt to formulate in our Church a system of confession and absolution differing in no essential particulars from that practised in the Church of Rome.”

I have said already that those first engaged in this movement, “formulated” nothing, initiated nothing. Consciences were shaken ; there was a stern preaching of repentance. Men came, like the people to S. John Baptist, to confess their sins, knowing that our Lord had left power to His priests to pronounce His absolving word. What would our accusers have had us do ? Would they not have had us speak *His* healing Word, Whose “word is with power ?” Would they have had us bid them, “go, heal your-

^w The Temple ; The Church militant p. 243. ^x Private devotions,
The second Day p. 51. ed. 1848. ^y Sermon n. 1.

Good confession must be the same every where. cxlix

selves," like the shepherds of Israel, on whom God pronounces woe, and says, "The diseased have ye not healed, nor bound up that which was broken, nor sought that which was lost." But if confessions are heard at all, there is no room for "formulating." In any confession and absolution, there are two parties, the party who confesses, and the priest, who hears the confession. The rules for confession are simple, and must be the same everywhere. One way of confessing, in itself, is better than another, but each must confess in the way natural to each; interruptions do but disturb the penitent. The conditions are religious and spiritual, not technical, or to be taught by art; simplicity, humility, purity, faithfulness, plainness, discretion, modesty, integrity, tearfulness, continuousness, courage, self-accusation, readiness to obey, are the qualities which are proverbial among Roman writers². The absolution was put into our mouths by our Church. There remain only the penances given. These are everywhere now some light remedial practice, such (as Bishop Phillpotts described them) as might be "helps against evil habits for the future, remedies of some besetting sin, instruments, in short, of spiritual discipline³." Plainly those who, as yet, have not experience, might gain much from the wise and experienced. A physician of the body might well ask one older who had more experience, "What remedies have you found useful under such and such symptoms?" People may object to the use of confession; but if it is used at all (and it was and is forced upon us, if we would minister to the souls for whom Jesus shed His Precious Blood) no one can seriously think that we should give less wise advice if we studied the experiences of those who had most thoughtfully, attentively, and lov-

² See below p. 151.

³ Letter to the Dean of Exeter. p. 24.

cl *Dr. Perowne concedes all which I wish.*

ingly watched the human heart, as S. Francis de Sales, or S. Philip Néri or S. Charles Borromeo. There is wisdom required, to which sin to direct a penitent's chief attention; what means of victory to suggest to those who fall back into the same sins, or are guilty of habitual sin, or have difficulty in breaking off from a proximate occasion of sin. Those of experience may give advice, for which we may well be grateful, and which has nothing to do with controversy. It was in such matters, for which, now many years ago, I found the advice of the lovers of souls in this Manual specially useful to myself in hearing confessions.

However, whatever Dr. Perowne may think of any of us, he concedes frankly all which I wish.

“^bFor my own part, I think it would be vain to deny that the Church of England does, in certain cases, sanction both private confession and individual absolution. I will go further, and say that I believe she has shewn the truest wisdom and the truest tenderness in permitting both the one and the other; and if nothing more were asserted than this, I should not think it worth while to dispute the assertion. I should feel that it must be left very largely to the discretion of each individual clergyman, how far he considered it wise in particular cases to encourage confession. I should think any clergyman guilty of neglect of duty and disregard of his office, if he refused to give ghostly counsel and the benefit of absolution to those who were burdened by their consciences, and who heartily and humbly desired it, in order to be admitted to the Holy Communion, or on a bed of sickness.”

The chief, probably, of these authorities have, in one way or other, been brought before people's minds during a long

^b Sermon p. 8.

series of years^c. The present collection will probably share the fate of its predecessors, be looked at, cast aside and forgotten. For what people do not care for, or wish that it had not been written, on the side to which they are opposed, they contrive speedily to forget. It is an encumbrance, which they bundle out of sight as fast as they can. It was an acute saying of Archbishop Whateley, "many wish to have truth on their side, but few wish to be on the side of truth." Nevertheless I thought it a work of charity

^c The earliest Catena was (if I recollect right) upon this and some other subjects, by an Undergraduate, who wished to find himself supported by authority, in 1841 : in 1842, The Rev. (now Bp.) C. Wordsworth made a very full Catena in an Appendix to a sermon, which he preached in his then office of under-master of Winchester : his chief subject was the restoration of discipline ; so the authorities on discipline and private confession were mixed together. I myself added some in the notes on my second sermon, "The entire absolution of the penitent," Dr. (afterwards Bp.) Jeune having preached against my first. The Rev. W. Maskell, in a book which attracted a good deal of attention, "The doctrine of absolution," 1849, added some of the Articles of Enquiry in the 17th century, the Irish Canons, and Abp. Wake, with other well-known writers, quoted for a different purpose in previous collections, with which he was probably unacquainted ; some I added or repeated in my letter to Mr. Richards, "The Church leaves her children free to whom to open their grief," (Letter and Appendix), and my Letter to the Bishop of London. A good many more authorities were added by the Rev. W. Cooke in an Appendix to his work "The power of the priesthood" (1858,) ; some were gleaned by Rev. J. C. Chambers in "the Church and the World" 2nd series 1867. Mr. Cooke added more authorities in his Appendix of 1874. To him I find that I am indebted for directing my attention to the great names of Mede, Bishop Sanderson, Bishop Berkeley, as well as to the Minor works of the great Bishop Pearson, and Bishop Bayly ; as also to Dean Turner, Becon, Hakewil, Mason, Scrivener, Chillingworth. Mr. Cooke has other quotations from W. Perkins (a Calvinistic writer), King James I, Bishop Downname, The whole Duty of man ; Dr. Littleton (Sermon before the Royal Family 1675) ; "The plausible argument of a Romish priest from Scripture, answered by an English Protestant 1686," described in the title page as "seasonable and useful for all Protestant families ;" "The Faith and Practice of a Church of England man," 1688, (with the imprimatur of the Archbishop of Canterbury),

clii *Summary of English advocates of confession.*

to bring before those who *would* hear, some portion of the evidence, that the very chief of our divines have recognised Confession and Absolution as a provision of our Church for the healing of our infirmities, and the cure of diseases which might otherwise fester and bring death upon the soul.

It may, any how, startle some, that what they have been ignorantly declaiming against, as undermining the system of the Church of England, has been maintained by the most zealous of her defenders; that what they have condemned, as Roman, has been claimed by controversialists of ours against Rome; that what they have spoken against, as injurious to the soul, and interfering between it and its Redeemer, has been valued by some who lived in closest union with Him. Some may be healthfully ashamed that they have declaimed against the practice as unprotestant, when it is advocated in all the Lutheran formulæ: some, that they declaimed against it as undermining the Reformation, seeing that it was advocated by Reformers such as Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer: some, who have been pressing upon the Bishops to put down it and us, may be checked in their eagerness when they see that 4 Archbishops and 21 Bishops, of repute as writers, have more or less strongly advocated it; that 10 Bishops or more in their Visitation Articles enquired whether their Clergy had invited their people to confession: some of intellect

Dean Brough, Dr. Puller (author of "Moderation of the Church of England"); Bp. Patrick; Dr. Horneck (author of a popular book, *The happy Ascetic*); Bp. Beveridge; Archbishop Sharp; Dr. G. Hickes, Dr. Fiddes (who was still in repute early in this century) Dr. Collier, Dr. Hole, Dr. Bisse, W. Wogan Esq., P. Waldo Esq. (Lect. on the liturgy), R. Cecil; Henry Hallam; Bp. H. Marsh; Prof. Blunt, Bp. Short, Bp. Hamilton, Rev. Sir W. Palmer, Bp. Wordsworth. The whole collection is now published in a cheap form.

Confession, if good on the death bed, good before. cliii

may perhaps pause, as if they *may* have been mistaken—any how they cannot pooh pooh it, when they see such names as Berkeley, Hooker, Sanderson, Barrow, Pearson, against them; some of unction may hesitate, when they see such as Bishops Hall, Andrewes, Ken, J. Taylor, Wilson, G. Herbert, on the other side: some, who conscientiously say, “The Bible and the Bible only,” even while their tradition overrides the plain teaching of the Bible, may be startled to see “the immortal Chillingworth” (as some used to call him) even vehemently inviting to, what they themselves vehemently condemn.

There are two other subjects, upon which it may be well to say a few words; as they are the most frequent topics with those who, seeing to a certain extent that the Church of England does, in certain cases, recommend confession, would minimise its use. The one relates to the frequency of confession itself, which they suppose the Church of England to allow: the other, ‘direction,’ is in itself wholly independent of confession.

If confession is once admitted, as desirable in some cases, on the sick bed, it manifestly cannot be confined to it. No one could seriously think that a sin, which haunted the conscience, must, as a matter of duty and of loyalty to the English Church, remain there, unconfessed except to God, and must not be relieved, until God sends some sickness upon the sinner. It would be a hideous cruel unreal theory. In the case of an inured or habitual or besetting sin, it would be too likely that there might be relapses, for some time, before the habit was, by God’s grace, finally conquered. Those who have had most experience in helping others to conquer in their hard battles, recommend, in the first instance at least, very frequent confession.

cliv *Value of confn. against deep-rooted sin, deadly*

It is a new knowledge to those who have been habitually defeated, that, by the grace of God, they *can* conquer their besetting sins. When they *do* conquer, they are, it is known, very commonly in danger of becoming secure. The devil may "depart from" those who have been his slaves "for a season," to renew his attack, if they should become self-confident. Our Lord tells us, that he is watching his opportunity to return. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest and findeth none. Then, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out;" and if he "findeth it empty swept and garnished, then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

But also in the very opposite class, of those who have nothing on their minds but sins of human infirmity. Every (though, as men say, slight) sin is an act of ingratitude against the infinite love of our all-loving God. No two souls are exactly alike; no two diseases; nor the same disease in two different souls; nor are the graces, vouchsafed to any two souls, the same. Nor can one estimate, what may be, in himself or another, the ingratitude of resisting any check within, i. e. the voice of God the Holy Ghost, warning against any slight sin. Deliberate or wilful commission of any slighter (as they are called) venial sins, forms a class of sin by itself. No one, then, can prescribe for others, in vague terms, what of these lesser sins ought *not* to disquiet the conscience, and so, according to their interpretation, *not* to be confessed. It would be moral tyranny. Even advancing Christians

or venial. No one rule for its frequency. clv

have found frequent confession, a help against some deep-rooted infirmity of our poor nature. Gardeners have recommended frequent mowing, as *the* mode of doing to death the deep-rooted bindweed which, left to itself, spreads and destroys every flower of the garden. Even so, when toiling to *exterminate* from the garden of God, that is, our souls, some deep-seated evil, there have been, and are, those who have found frequent confession a real help.

In a matter so very tender and delicate as the relation of the soul to God, I should think that any hard dry technical rules would be an undue interference with God's inward leading of the soul, and that it would be far safer to leave the frequency to the soul itself. Only, broadly and in contrast with the sayings of those who mostly speak on *à priori* grounds, so far from repeated or habitual confession being "enfeebling" or "injurious to the delicacy of conscience, a temptation to self-deception, formal and perfunctory"^d—or the like, every one, I should think, who knows anything of souls or of confession must know this to be the exact contrary of the truth; they must have seen that the conscience grows more delicate, more truthful, more alive to the truth; more real, more simple, more earnest, more exact. They must have seen how souls which have used it, have "shone more and more to the perfect day." Other souls have, seemingly grown equally, often more, with less frequent confession. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. Even so is every one who is born of the Spirit." Prayer to God is a simple duty. Our Lord teaches us always to pray and not to faint; S. Paul, to pray without

^d Dr. Perowne p. 18.

ceasing. What is to pray without ceasing? How it can best be fulfilled, must vary with different minds or different conditions or circumstances. No one rule could be laid down. Holy Communion used to be the "daily bread" of the early Christians. There has been much written about its frequency. Devout writers have taken both sides. The Centurion was devout, who said, "Lord I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof;" and Zaccheus, "who received Him joyfully." The streams of Divine grace are not pent up like the water in a canal, at one dull, even, unvarying level. We cannot make one unvarying law for souls which God has made so varied, and forms so variously.

It is otherwise with a matter, akin but quite distinct from this, "what is called direction."

The subject of "direction" (as it is popularly called) is entirely distinct from that of "confession," so much so, that if this subject of "direction" is mentioned in this volume, it can be only incidentally. The office of a confessor ends with the confession. He prescribes, for a given time, such penitential observances or acts or prayers, as he thinks may at once promote penitence, and be remedial against some leading sin confessed. But therewith his office concludes. Since first-confessions were (until of late) among us, mostly of a long period of years, it was natural that those who made them, should have wished, if they had the opportunity, to continue to make them to the person, who received the first, as knowing the soul in a way, in which no other could. But this is entirely voluntary. The confessor retains no right over the conscience. Since, by the words "let him come to

me or some other," which the Church of England puts into the mouth of the parish-priest, it leaves the choice of him to whom any should "open his grief," absolutely free to each, it gives a corresponding power to *any* priest to receive the confession. It is of course, a power to be exercised at any one's responsibility, in dread of the words, "if the blind lead the blind." Still the power is by virtue of their ordination lodged in the priest, and no external restriction is placed upon the use of it. It is "effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise," by whomsoever administered. All is left to people's consciences. Of course, there is the obvious peril, that a person may change his confessor, in order to conceal the fact, that the sin which he confesses has been a besetting sin, and that what he has now to confess is a *relapse* into that sin. But this which (as appears from this volume) takes place among insincere persons everywhere, can, like all insincerity, be remedied only by the grace of God.

This may tend perhaps to remove from some minds a popular objection to the use of confession, that the priest, thereby, obtains a power over the conscience. Obvious as it is, it is necessary to say, that, by the fact of receiving a confession, no priest acquires any right whatsoever. If any should have received confession of a sin, which would make him who confessed it amenable to the criminal law (as murder), it is as if the grave closed over it. He is forbidden, under penalty of sin, to allude to it, out of confession, even to him who confessed it. It might obviously occasion many evils, if it were otherwise, and so it is absolutely forbidden. Each confession, if made to the same priest, is absolutely free as the first; it is made and re-

ceived at the sole wish of him who makes it. People, who are in earnest about their souls, are not capricious about them: and they continue, perhaps for tens of years, to make their confessions to the same priest. They, of course, acquire, so to speak, an additional right to make them, beyond the right which every soul, which has needs, has towards one who has been heretofore its physician. But the priest acquires none. This is all so obvious, that the only occasion for saying it is, that, at this time, so many talk against confession, who absolutely know nothing of it, not the *a b c* of its rules. It has nothing whatever to do with priestly power, which people have learnt to talk of from the bad book of a French writer.

The office of "confessor" and "director" being thus distinct, I have myself never undertaken what is technically called the office of "director." Naturally, I have given such spiritual advice as I could, and have answered questions, whenever I have been asked them, to the best of the ability, which God may have given me. These, of course, have ranged over the whole compass of human wants, as far as I could be of use to any one, or they thought that I could be of use, theological, controversial, scriptural, moral, spiritual, practical; cases of conscience or intellectual perplexity. In saying this, I only mean to say, in these days of misunderstanding or misrepresentation, one way or another, that, when I say that I never undertook the office of director, I did not, and could not, when it was laid upon me, in the Providence of God, decline that of guiding in what way I could, by His help, souls which came to me, and did not willingly fail those who came to ask my help, in any respect in which I could help them. But from the first moment, in

Dependence of some over-against self-dependence. clix

which people entrusted me in any degree with the care of their souls, I remember that my object was to see, how God was leading them, not to lead them myself. I never interfered with any bias or choice, which was not sinful. The event went oftentimes contrary to my human wishes or judgement.

But whether or no I may be thought competent to say anything about direction, I have been asked to take this opportunity of warning against "over-direction." "I wish," one writes to me, "something could be done to check the tendency on the part of some Clergy to claim *implicit* obedience on all sorts of subjects from their penitents. Instead of trying to deepen and develope the sense of personal moral responsibility, they really crush it, and so help to justify one of the ordinary objections to the system." This has not originally, I should hope, been the fault of the Clergy, even if some have been participators in it. Over against the wild independence and self-dependence of women as well as men, against God, revelation, Holy Scripture, as a whole or in details, perhaps in consequence of it, there is in others a laziness of mind, which makes rather a boast of getting rid of its own responsibility, rolling all details, little or great, from itself upon the person whom it takes and calls its "director." The director is referred to, on matters which such an one would much better decide for herself. Some guide their director to misguide themselves. Some justify peculiarities of their own by parading supposed sayings of their 'director,' which, having passed through the current of their own minds, have become anything rather than what was originally intended.

Plainly there are provinces, religious, moral, practical,

clx *What office would anti-Sacerdotalists leave us ?*

spiritual, upon which we, the clergy, who have vowed to be “‘diligent in prayers, and in reading the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh;” to “apply ourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all our cares and studies this way ; and continually to pray God the Father, by the mediation of our only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost ; that, by daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures, we may wax riper and stronger in our ministry”—can give more competent opinions to the people committed to our charge, than they can form for themselves. Else there would be no occasion for the office of pastor. One wonders sometimes, what those, who speak against sacerdotalism, really conceive the office of the Clergy to be. To read prayers [intercessors under the great Intercessor according even to the old sign, “The Parson prays for all,” they would hardly allow us to be], to preach sermons (which any or all should criticise, or pronounce not to be the Gospel), to teach little children (which is of course a high office), or to be a respectable class of Police officers, to teach the poor obedience to the law or non-interference with the rich, and the performance of certain religious acts which, although really sacerdotal, they do not acknowledge to be so,—these are certainly no large dimensions of the sacerdotal office, but what more they would leave us, I know not. It would be well, if they would ask themselves.

However, self-assertion, or a seeming wish to gain power over the minds of others, only provokes this counter-depreciation, and gives, at least, a plausible plea for the

‘ Ordering of priests.

common declamation against "priestly influence." It was well said once, that "the guide of souls ought to be transparent to lead people to Christ." Our office is, not to supersede, but to develope and deepen the sense of personal moral responsibility; to teach those who look to us for guidance, how to use the judgement which God has given them; to furnish them with clear principles to discern right from wrong: to suggest to them how to discern, in the secret whispers of conscience, the voice of God the Holy Ghost, "a word" which, it is said, "thou shalt hear behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left;" and to distinguish this from the human spirit, or Satan transformed into an angel of light; to train them to obey, not us, but Christ, the Master of both.

But whether they, for whom this is written, heed it or no, whether or no they claim *implicit* obedience on all sorts of subjects from their penitents, or only that deference which those who seek advice owe to those better instructed than themselves, of whom they seek it (such as our Catechism teaches that we owe to our teachers, *spiritual pastors* and masters), this exaggeration of the relation of director and directed belongs to relative strength or weakness of mind. It has no connection with confession. It is a well known principle in the Roman Church, that the Director's is a distinct office; that, if chosen, he may be different from the ordinary confessor; and that there is no occasion to have any. S. Francis de Sales, I suppose, spoke the literal truth, when, upon being asked who was his director, he produced from his pocket "the Spiritual Combat," and declared that it had been his director for 18 years.

Evils of this over-direction were forcibly pointed out, some eight years ago by one much experienced in the guidance of souls, who has observed, from a nearer point than myself, both the good and the defects and mistakes of younger men.

“^s Direction, rightly understood, is only ‘ghostly counsel and advice’ become habitual. The evils, popularly associated with the idea of direction, and ordinarily intended to be condemned under the term, viz. the substitution of the priest’s judgement for the true action of the conscience of the person under his influence, and the consequent loss of all sense or obligation of personal responsibility, are but the abuse of a most sacred trust. The true object of direction is not to preserve a hold on the mind of the penitent, and habituate it to lean on authority, overruling its own powers of action by minute details of rule, but rather to develop true principles, and awaken dormant energies within the soul, so as to enable it to judge and act more healthfully for itself. Direction, in its true sense, means such help as may strengthen and assist the soul in the use of its renewed powers, not destroy them; quicken its sense of responsibility, not paralyse it.”

And more recently; “^h I myself greatly prefer the term spiritual guide, to that of director. The latter term, at least, seems to imply an authority over the conscience, that might interfere with its free action, while the former can only imply what we understand to be the true aim of a Confessor, that of giving assistance and support, so as to co-operate with the renewed action of the soul. Con-

^s Doctrine of Confession in the Church of England, 1869, by the Rev. T. T. Carter.

^h Freedom of confession in the Church of England, a Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury. 1877 pp. 11, 12.

ducted on such a principle, confession can but conduce to peace, to strength, and progress in the spiritual life."

Dr. Neale also **spoke strongly against** this over-direction. I quote him, not as accepting all which he says, but to shew that there have been protests against over-direction. "There is a danger, lest a sufficiently strong line be not drawn between the practice of Confession, and the practice of Direction. The one is as old as the Apostles, the other the invention of the last three centuries: the one is, though not in all cases necessary, in all cases highly expedient; the other, if sometimes expedient, certainly in many instances pernicious: the one, to persons in earnest, scarcely capable of abuse; the other, the more scrupulous the conscience, the more likely to become a snare: the denial of the one, a virtual negation of the power of the keys; the denial of the other, a simple objection to priestly influence. No two things can, as Direction is generally understood, differ more than that system, and the intercourse which must necessarily exist between the priest and penitent. . . . That which is usually meant by Direction; the recommendation of systems of devotion, plans of life, books, the regulation of intercourse with friends and acquaintances; to these things, and such as these, objection is principally, and, for the most part, not unreasonably made. It may not be easy to set down in black and white the difference between that kind of advice which must necessarily occur in Confession, and that sort of Direction which has nothing to do with it. . . . But, for a single definition, perhaps the advice which is necessary, has to do with a

¹ Church Difficulties p. 238 quoted by Canon Cooke, Power of the priesthood in absolution p. 106.

clxiv *Objections to confession founded on over-direction*

decision between bad and good : that which is always unnecessary, often inexpedient, between good and better. Nothing can be more important than to set prominently before English Churchmen this fact ; that with Direction of this kind, Confession has no necessary connexion whatever. Incalculable mischief has arisen from the confusion of the two. Good men, for instance, who would never dare to breathe a syllable in depreciation of those supernatural powers of Absolution which Christ has committed to us, are continually expressing a hope that Confession may not be too frequent, may be the exception, and not the rule. Why ? Because, say they, individual consciences ought to be individually responsible ; because repetition of such intercourse tends to keep the soul in a kind of spiritual leading-strings ; because there is a danger in shifting the burden of one's own conscience on to the shoulders of another ; that is, they object to Confession, because they discover, and that with no inconsiderable degree of truth, danger in Direction. . . . And, as there is danger of Direction being engrafted on Confession, so also I cannot deny that, in some cases among ourselves, this system has prevailed, and its fruits have been apparent."

The following words relate to an experience which was his, (for he states that it was)—not mine. Those of tender consciences may feel very slight sins of human infirmity, more than others do whole cart-loads of deadly sin. The desire for confession implies the tenderness of conscience, not the gravity of the sin. And so souls may come frequently to confession, in order to hear our Lord's absolving voice, without burdening themselves or the Priest with undue direction. Plainly any who should use confession for advice rather than for absolution, should be sent back

to learn what all sin is, an offence against the infinite love of the All-good God, ingratitude to Him Who became Man and died for love of us.

Dr. Neale's experience, against which he protests in such merited strength of words, was, "We know how many, especially among women, in coming to Confession for the first time, come rather for Direction, than for Absolution : look for the guide, rather than for the ambassador ; desire the counsellor rather than the priest. Details of domestic life, engagements in the world, plans of amusement, plans of study, the division of the day, the intercourse with friends : all these things are ready, if we do not resist the tendency, to be submitted to us ; things which have not a right or a wrong ; things, which may be pursued in a thousand ways, the one as Christian as the other ; things in many cases, respecting which the interrogator is likely to form a far more correct judgement than the priest : what have we to do with all this ? Who hath required this at our hands ? Yet this it is that sets English minds against auricular Confession : this that cuts so many off from one of the great means of grace."

It is right to add that among the writers who are popularly decried as wishing to gain power over people's souls, one writes,

"^k The Director should aim at strengthening the sense of personal responsibility in those who consult him, and at increasing the sensitiveness and vigour of their consciences.

"Over-direction commonly weakens the conscience by leading persons to lean rather upon external aid than upon those natural instincts of right and wrong which have been implanted in them by God. A wise Physician will

^k The Priest's Prayer-book. p. 160. 3rd. ed.

clxvi *Director to follow, and watch God going before.*

discourage the habitual use of drugs, and will rather urge attention to regimen and exercise.

“The Director should therefore reserve his aid for matters of real difficulty. If applied to in simple and obvious cases, he should rather, by appealing to the conscience of the inquirer, endeavour to draw the answer from his lips.

“To avoid the grave perils of over-direction, the Director will take care that the interviews which he grants shall be short and infrequent.”

I will add one more extract, from one deservedly loved, (although the writer no longer belonged to our Church, when he wrote it,) because he was giving not his own opinion, but, “¹reporting fairly both sides of the Catholic tradition, as it is to be found both in ancient books and modern, inclining perhaps a little to the ancient, because on this point of asceticism as on most others,” he says, “I find in them an absence of exaggeration, which I often desiderate in modern systems. My object will be to prevent any opinion of my own escaping me.” The description of this office is—

“^mThe business of a director is not that of a pioneer. It is rather to go behind, and to watch God going before. He must keep his eye fixed on God, Who is in the dimness ahead. He does not lead his penitents. The Holy Ghost leads them. He holds out his hands from behind, as a mother does to her tottering child, to balance his uncertain steps, as he sways overmuch, now on one side, now on another. He is not to have a way of his own applied to every one. . . . He only knows that we are in the way which is right for us, when he sees God in front. Then

¹ Faber, *Growth in holiness*. The office of spiritual Director pp. 330, 331.

^m *Ib.* pp. 341. 346.

he keeps us superstitiously in the Blessed Foot-prints left behind. He looks after our advance, and when he sees God increasing the distance between Himself and the soul, he spurs on the latter, discreetly and gently, yet firmly and uninterruptedly. He gains as much light from prayer, as from his knowledge of character and his personal observation of ourselves. His office is very supernatural, but it is very natural also; and he will not direct us well, if he overshadows the natural by the supernatural. It would be a safer mistake, if he attributed a light to his natural penetration and sagacity, the divination of his own genius, which was really due to a gratuitous and supernatural discernment of spirits, than if he took that for supernatural which was really natural. It is a perilous thing to make a superstition of direction Above all, let us have no mysteries in direction."

The subject is of moment, not only on account of grave mischief to souls, which may result, if over-direction (as is not unlikely) should become misdirection, but of the slur upon confession itself, which such mistakes occasion, although relating to matters of human prudence or skill, not to the Divine gift itself. The mistake has, I imagine, originated, not with the Clergy, but with young people of indolent, or contrariwise enthusiastic temperament. Still we, the Clergy, are not exempt from the human infirmity of love of power, which in us, as well as in the rest of our race, can only be kept down by the grace of God; only in us it would be the more mischievous, because of the possible harm to souls. Being men, we are liable to all infirmities of men, and the more some wish to be over-directed, the more danger there is lest we should over-direct. It is of course flattering to human self-esteem to be

consulted on all sorts of matters; so we have need to watch warily, even when walking in a right path.

Amid all our sorrows, this subject of revived confession has a two-fold comfort in these troubled times.

1) It illustrates the power of teaching in our English Prayer-book, in the language of the people. In every Baptism, the Prayer-Book teaches Baptismal regeneration: in its Catechism and every Communion, it teaches the Real Presence: in its Ordinations the Bishop transmits the authority to remit sins in the Name of Christ: in the Communion-office, it teaches communicants to resort to confession, if they need it: in its service for the sick, it regulates the use of confession. The Prayer-book all we, the Clergy, must acknowledge, as above and superior to ourselves. It is an authority, which, if we contradict, we condemn ourselves. It alone taught our Laity, in the first instance, to use confession: the laity, in those early days, often unknowingly taught it to their Clergy by asking to use it. For a distinct proportion of the Clergy, who in those days sought confession, did so, on the ground that it was inconsistent, they thought, to hear the confessions which they were asked to hear, and not to make one themselves.

2) It has been a characteristic of this revival that it has been sacramental^a. It was the early reproach of contro-

^a It used to be put forward, in the earlier defences of ourselves, nearly forty years ago and onwards, that the formularies of the Church of England never severed off the two great Sacraments of the Gospel, without signifying that there were other gifts, which were, in some sense, Sacraments, having outward signs of inward grace; "*signa visibilia invisibilis gratiæ*." In this sense confirmation, ordination, absolution are Sacraments. Marriage is so termed by S. Paul. See Dr. Pusey's "letter to the Bishop of Oxford," 1839, pp. 97—109. "Letter on the Articles treated on in Tract xc" "Number of Sacraments" Ed. 2.

versialists, "They [the Tractarians] substitute the sacraments for Christ." As if Christ's sacraments could be substituted for Christ: since it is He, into Whom Baptism engrafts us, and the Holy Eucharist is His Presence; in It, "we eat the Flesh of Christ and drink His Blood; we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us." But the reproach acknowledged that the revival was Sacramental. And this was its characteristic. A revival, if there should be one in a Presbyterian body, would turn in some way on the relation of the soul to God and Christ, perhaps to the eternal decrees of His love, and the immediate relation of the soul to Him. It is the very principle of such bodies, that nothing should intervene between the soul and its God. They have not sacraments in the Church's sense. They reject what they call rightly "Sacerdotal absolution." If God were to make such a revival a channel of grace, it would be through the amount of truth, contained in it. It is a naked Gospel, which Wesleyanism preaches, that "we are all sinners; Christ died for sinners; He bids sinners come to Him Who redeemed us by His Blood; if we come to Him, He will receive us." It is partial truth; but, as far as it goes, it *is* truth. And God blesses through truth. In like way, a Presbyterian believes and teaches "spiritual Communion." Spiritual Communion is a blessed

1841 pp. 33—42. "Letter to the Bp. of London" pp. 5—16, in which I quoted (p. 10) "a work which received, after the first edition, the sanction of the Most Reverend the Abps. of Canterbury and of Armagh to whom it was by permission, inscribed." It was also, I understood, recommended to Candidates for Holy Orders. In it, I said, Mr. Palmer cites for the more extended use of the word Sacrament, not Fathers only but, in our own Church, Archbishops Cranmer and Secker, Bishop Jeremy Taylor and Mason. Of late, this sense has been assumed as known. Bp. Overall also uses it. ab. p. lviii.

truth. It might be made, with every breath we breathe. In this too, God blesses through truth. In the Church of England, the revival has been through gifts which belong only to the Church, the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, and the power of the keys, which He committed to His Church and which belong to her alone. And He Who blesses through truth, has blessed through them, and has set His seal upon them.

This particular help to the right discharge of the office of hearing confessions contains the advice of some of the most experienced Confessors in the later Church, distributed in the order of subjects adopted by the Abbé Gaume.

The Abbé Gaume, in his preface to the collection, says that his "guiding thought in translating and framing that work" was; "If all the faithful were still, at this day, confessed and directed by S. Charles Borromeo, S. Francis Xavier, S. Philip de Neri, &c. they would lose nothing in being so confessed and directed. On the other hand, if all confessors, especially at the outset, could say to themselves, 'I hear confessions, as S. Charles, S. Francis de Sales, S. Francis Xavier, S. Philip de Neri, &c.; I follow the same rules, which sanctified them and many others with them,' they would not make their sacred ministry a subject of scruple and torment."

In doing this, the Abbé Gaume laid it down as a duty to himself, to insert the whole which each of these teachers had said, "without adding, diminishing, change or commentary." This, of course, had the advantage, that the same advice was often reiterated, almost in the same words,

and so bore the stamp of all those minds, shewing the harmony and agreement between them. There did not seem the same reason for this in this Compendium. Some things have been omitted as being virtually repetitions ; some, as not belonging to the state of things in which we are, (in which we have no occasion for discussions on rigorism or relaxedness, of probabilism or probabiliorism, or on "reserved cases.") As in other books of this series, I have felt it to be my duty to adhere to the teaching of the later English Church. The translator has used a vivid and condensed style, without, I trust, sacrificing any of the thoughts of the original. May God, in His mercy, enable the work to speak to the consciences of those for whom Jesus died, and fit us, the Clergy, more to minister to them !

E. B. PUSEY.

CHRIST CHURCH.

ADVENT 1877.

[It may not be amiss to subjoin a Declaration, to which 29 well-known names were appended, which we put forth some 4 years ago, in view of "the serious misapprehensions prevalent on the subject of confession and absolution ;" as being "what we hold and teach on the subject, in reference to the points which have been brought under discussion."

1. We believe and profess, that Almighty God has promised forgiveness of sins, through the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, to all who turn to Him, with true sorrow for sin, out of unfeigned and sincere love to Him, with full purpose of amendment of life, and lively faith in Jesus Christ.

2. We also believe and profess, that our Lord Jesus Christ has instituted in His Church a special means for the remission of sin after Baptism, and for the relief of consciences, which special means the Church of England retains and administers as part of her Catholic heritage.

3. We affirm that—to use the language of the Homilies—“Absolution hath the promise of forgiveness of sin^a,” although “by the express word of the New Testament it hath not this promise annexed and tied to the visible sign, which is imposition of hands,” and “therefore,” as it is said, “Absolution is no such Sacrament as Baptism and the Communion are^b.” We cannot admit, that the Church of England in Art. xxv. condemns the ministry of Absolution any more than she condemns the Rites of Confirmation and Ordination, which she solemnly administers. We believe that God through Absolution confers an inward spiritual grace and His assurance of forgiveness on those who receive it with faith and repentance, as in Confirmation and Ordination He confers grace on those who rightly receive the same.

4. In our Ordination, as Priests of the Church of England, the words of our Lord to His Apostles—“Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained,”—were applied to us individually. Thus it appears, that the Church of England considers this Commission to be, not a temporary endowment of the Apostles, but a gift lasting to the end of time. It was said to each of us, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands;” and then followed the words, “Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained^c.”

5. The only form of words provided for us in the Book of Common Prayer for applying this absolving power to individual souls, runs thus:—“Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences; And by His Authority committed to me I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen^d.” Upon this we remark, first, that in these words forgiveness of sins is ascribed to Him Who, as God, forgives sins, our Lord Jesus Christ; yet that the Priest, acting by a delegated authority and as an instrument, does through these words convey the absolving grace; and secondly, that the absolution from *sins* cannot be understood to be the removal of any censures of the Church, because (a) the sins from

^a Homily “of Common Prayer and Sacraments.” ^b Ib. ^c “The Form and Manner of Ordering of Priests.” ^d “The Order for the Visitation of the Sick.”

which the penitent is absolved are presupposed to be sins known previously to himself and God only: (b) the words of the Latin form relating to those censures are omitted in our English form, and (c) the release from excommunication is in Art. xxxiii reserved to "a Judge that hath authority thereunto."

6. This provision, moreover, shews that the Church of England when speaking of "the benefit of absolution," and empowering her Priests to absolve, means them to use a definite form of absolution, and did not merely contemplate a general reference to the promises of the Gospel.

7. In the Service for "the Visitation of the sick" the Church of England orders that the sick man shall even "*be moved* to make a special Confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter." When the Church requires that the sick man should, in such case, be moved to make a special Confession of his sins, we cannot suppose her thereby to rule that her members are bound to defer to a death-bed (which they may never see) what they know to be good for their souls. We observe that the words, "*be moved to,*" were added in 1662, and that therefore at the last revision of the Book of Common Prayer the Church of England affirmed the duty of exhorting to Confession in certain cases even more strongly than at the date of the Reformation.

8. The Church of England also, holding it "requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a sure trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience," commands the Minister to bid "any" one who "cannot quiet his own conscience herein," to come to him, or "to some other discreet Minister of God's Word and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with," and therefore as distinct from, "ghostly counsel and advice *," and since she directs that this invitation should be repeated in giving warning of Holy Communion, and Holy Communion is constantly offered to all, as the most precious of the means of grace, it follows that the use of Confession may be, at least in some cases, of not unfrequent occurrence.

9. We believe that the Church left it to the consciences of individuals, according to their sense of their needs, to decide whether they would confess or not, as expressed in that charitable exhortation in the First English Prayer-book, "requiring such as shall be satisfied with a general Confession, not to be offended with them that do use, to their further satisfying, the auricular and secret Con-

* Exhortation in the Service for the Holy Communion.

fession to the Priest; nor those also, which think needful or convenient, for the quietness of their own consciences, particularly to open their sins to the Priest, to be offended with them that are satisfied with their humble confession to God and the general Confession to the Church: but in all things to follow and keep the rule of charity; and every man to be satisfied with his own conscience, not judging other men's minds or consciences; whereas he hath no warrant of God's Word to the same." And although this passage was omitted in the second Prayer-book, yet that its principle was not repudiated, may be gathered from the "Act for the Uniformity of Service," (1552) which, while authorizing the second Prayer-book, asserts the former book to be "agreeable to the Word of God and the primitive Church."

10. We would further observe, that the Church of England has nowhere limited the occasions upon which her Priests should exercise the office which she commits to them at their ordination; that to command her Priests in two of her Offices to hear confessions, if made, cannot be construed negatively into a command not to receive confessions on any other occasions. But, in fact, since the Christian ought to live in continual preparation for Holy Communion and for death, the two occasions specified do practically comprise the whole of his adult life. It is notorious that a long succession of Divines of great repute in the Church of England, from the very time when the English Prayer-book was framed, speak highly of Confession, without limiting the occasions upon which, or the frequency with which, it should be used; and the 113th Canon, framed in the Convocation of 1603, recognized Confession as a then existing practice, in that it decreed under the severest penalties, that "if any man confess his secret and hidden sins to the Minister for the unburdening of his conscience, the said Minister shall not at any time reveal or make known to any person whatsoever, any crime or offence so committed to his trust and secrecy, except they be such crimes as by the laws of this realm his own life may be called into question for concealing the same."

11. While then we hold that no Priest is justified in requiring private Confession as a condition of receiving Holy Communion, we also hold that all who, under the circumstances above stated, claim the privilege of private Confession, are entitled to it, and that the Clergy are directed under certain circumstances to "move" persons to such confession. In insisting on this, as the plain meaning of the authorized language of the Church of England, we believe ourselves to be discharging our duty as her faithful Ministers."]

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^a The § 178, of the Abbé Gaume consists entirely of questions in Latin. They have been omitted altogether. See Preface pp. xiii-xvi. So have questions, on other commandments, not seemingly adapted to our circumstances.

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CHAPTER I.

Duties and qualities of a good Confessor, as Father, Physician, and Teacher.

It has been said by a holy man, "How great is the reward of good confessors, who are devoted to the conversion of souls, even their own salvation." S. James confirms the truth of this sentiment when he says, "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins^a." In some versions it is "*his* soul"—i. e. the soul of him who converts. But the Church mourns to see so many of her children lost through inefficient confessors, inasmuch as so large a part of the gain or loss of souls depends upon their good or bad direction. Pius V. said, "Dentur idonei confessarii, ecce omnium Christianorum plena reformatio." In truth if all confessors possessed that knowledge and that holiness which their weighty Ministry demands, the world would be less wicked, and the gates of hell less thronged. And here I do not speak of ordinary holiness,—a mere state of grace;—but of such a positive holiness as is essential to one who is bound to consider not himself alone, but the souls of others also. A good confessor

^a S. James v. 20. One used to strengthen himself for the heavy duties of the confessional by often repeating S. Augustine's words: "*Animam salvasti, animam tuam liberasti.*"

must avoid alike excessive indulgence and severity towards the consciences he directs; he must know how to probe the deepest wounds of sin without polluting his own soul; he must be able to deal with women and with young men who have fallen grievously without being sullied by the contact; he must deal firmly and without human respect towards great men; in short he must be filled with love, gentleness, and prudence.

But the fulfilment of these duties requires an extra-ordinary holiness, which can only be obtained by devout minds, and by those who are stedfast in prayer and meditation. Nothing else can give the light and grace needed for this ministry, so awful in the sight of the very Angels.

ARTICLE I.

FATHERLY LOVE.

I. **AIM** ^a at a father's love, inasmuch as your penitent is taught from the first to call you his father, and that as S. Ambrose says, Our Lord has appointed us as the dispensers of His Love in this ordinance: "*Vicarios amoris Christi.*" And what is more pure, true, strong, unwearying, disinterested, careful, generous, prudent, or patient than a father's love? Even such should be your love for your penitent, who is your spiritual child, and you should testify that love as follows.

The Penitent's name for his Confessor.

II. 1st. *By rejecting no one.* "*Semper tibi pendeat hamus, quo minime reris gurgite piscis erit;*" the poet of old said to the fisher. Even so should you be always prepared to hear the confessions of any who may seek you. Make no exceptions, especially of the poor and lowly, though they may present themselves at unusual seasons. You cannot tell what their mind or circumstances may be; and refusal might, unintentionally on your part, lead to the greatest hindrance or even to the spiritual ruin of a soul. It may be that among those who apply to you thus at inconvenient seasons, there will be found persons who have never been to confession, or have long neglected the practice. Were such as these to be sent

The love which rejects no one.

^a Prêtre Sanctifié, nn. 1-15.

away, it might well be feared that the infusion of extra-ordinary grace, which gave them courage to seek a confessor, would not last, and then they might never return, continuing in their sins to the end. What a fearful reckoning you would have before the tribunal of God, if your lack of charity had been the cause of the loss of these souls, or even of their lingering in sin, instead of returning to their Heavenly Father! And how rich a blessing to you, on the other hand, if they should once owe to your timely aid, their restoration to the Fold of Christ! You may thus win some noble victory for God. S. Philip Neri was wont to say, that he owed the conversion of his most devout penitents to the habit of being always willing to receive all applicants at all times, day or night.

III. Refuse no one, especially strangers; but neither refuse former penitents. Something special may have occurred to them, which may cause great hurt to their souls and to God's cause, if it be not promptly remedied. You may be called upon to receive penitents at times when you are least prepared; when you are most occupied, perhaps ill; but remember in such a case, that it is God Who has sought out these sinners by His grace, and that He brings them to you in order that by your charity towards them, you may advance both their salvation, and your own. Beware how you risk the loss of such honour to God, such help to their souls, and such gain to yourself. If it should be really impossible to you to receive them, appoint a future time for the purpose, even to your own inconvenience, testifying your real desire to hear and help them.

IV. From the outset then, welcome and encourage the penitent, when you perceive that he needs it; as for instance in the case of one who has long neglected confession. Relieve his natural difficulty by such words as these: "Thank God who has tarried so long for you, and who recalls you now. Be comforted. His long-suffering proves that He wills your salvation. Be brave. I will help you, by God's grace. However bad things may have been, we will set them right. Only speak out with a holy confidence."

V. Such a fatherly reception is most useful both to the penitent and to yourself: to the penitent, whose heart opens under the influence of your charity, so that he exerts himself to conceal nothing, and is prepared to accept whatever you say to him, when he finds in you a father as well as a judge:—and to yourself, when the submission and confidence of the penitent increase your zeal for his welfare; and when you find, that you are not obliged for his soul's sake to treat him with severity. From that time your love and his confidence give you a right to speak with authority and to expect everything from him. Moreover you avoid the dangers of an unwise indulgence, which is sometimes the last resource of a confessor who has received his penitent harshly and in consequence finds him intractable.

VI. It is a great error to receive such sinners with severity. If a penitent accuses himself of having neglected confession for long, and you express your wonder harshly, that one who has so long lived without God and His Sacraments should presume to call himself a Christian; it is but too likely that he will be frightened into keeping back some of that guilt

Danger of
repelling
the peni-
tent.

which he has already found so hard to confess; and thus, leaving you with fresh sacrilege, increased obstacle to confession, and a tendency to believe himself lost, who can marvel if he falls recklessly into fresh sin? Not long since when a criminal was sentenced to death, one who was present heard him say, "I should not have been here, but for a confessor who repelled me and dealt harshly with me." Be then most cautious on this head. Remember that it is not only the young who feel shame in accusing themselves of their faults; but that elder people, priests, and religious themselves experience the same. The most pious souls undergo it even in the confession of simple venial sins; and often riper years and exalted rank or position only make the confession of a serious fault, yet harder. Hence S. Paul says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.^b" These words, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted," are a warning to you as to the possible punishment of your harshness. Let the thought, how you would wish to be treated, were you to fall into some shameful sin (which God forbid), teach you how to treat others.

Charity in
bearing
with the
penitent
during
Confes-
sion.

VII. It is not enough to receive and encourage the penitent. You must bear with him during his confession. I grant that often the confessor is greatly harassed by a number of penitents, or even by one alone, who is lengthy, unintelligible, wordy, coarse; who brings you a confused mass of details and involved cases. Nothing can enable you to repress your

^b Gal. vi. 1.

impatience under such circumstances, save that paternal love which is never weary, and which lightens every burden. If you would cultivate this charity, engrave deeply in your heart and ponder well the following maxims: I. If Jesus Christ did not hesitate to give His Blood and His Life for the salvation of souls, how shall we His ministers refuse to give at least our time and our trouble for the same object? How can we use our powers better or more nobly than in the work to which our God gave Himself wholly? "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again." As though our Lord said to you, "If you deal patiently with this soul, if you help it, teach it, comfort it, sanctify it; be of good cheer; with that measure I will mete out to you: I will bear with you, help you, sanctify you. But if you refuse these good offices, woe be to you! you become unworthy of the like from Me. I will no longer bear indulgently with your faults, I will not grant you so much help: with that measure I will mete out to you." Thus it is your own plain interest which binds you to bear with the penitent. If the Day of Judgement will witness the great and eternal reward prepared for the least good works of material charity, how much greater praise and recompence will the Lord bestow on what is so far above all temporal gain; upon that spiritual charity which feeds souls, clothes them with celestial grace, delivers them from the bondage of Satan, and heals all their maladies? But indeed you will not wait till the Day of Judgement to receive the reward promised by your Heavenly Father to those whose

• S. Matt. vii. 2.

patient love brings His wandering children safely back to His loving Arms. Even in this life He will pour out the abundance of His spiritual consolations upon you ; preserving you from many a temptation, giving you grace to triumph over many another. Remember this, and never let your patience fail through the most wearisome confessions ; but be sure that when you leave your confessional, exhausted and spent in dealing paternally with souls, God in His turn will deal as a Father with you, and liberally bestow His grace and consolations upon you.

Of the charity which bears with the penitent notwithstanding his faults.

VIII. Exercise a special consideration towards those whose bodily defects, deafness, imperfect articulation, or anything similar, make it difficult to give them necessary help. Do not receive such persons in a public confessional, where what takes place can be overheard ; take them to some suitable place, where you can both hear and speak without any such risk. One good confession may remedy the imperfections of many past confessions. Do not be annoyed if you are obliged to require a general confession : in this case as in many others, a general confession will not take longer than a special one. Such penitents as these lead a very uniform life, and you will soon see into the general line of their faults. Do not lightly pass on such penitents to other Confessors, because you find it difficult to understand them, or to make them understand you. If the penitent's imperfections would create the same hindrance with another Confessor, why should you throw the difficulty upon him, rather than encounter it yourself, and give the poor penitent whatever help his infirmities will allow of his receiving? Bear with the trouble

patiently, and you will have your reward. If on the other hand the obstacle be one which would not exist elsewhere, (as for instance if the penitent speaks a language which you do not understand, but another does,) then you should assist him to find a suitable Confessor. I have known places where it was the habit of charitable pastors to gather all deaf and dumb people, and any others afflicted with infirmities, to certain suitable places, at fixed times, so as to relieve their spiritual necessities. We read in the Life of S. François de Sales that he did not hesitate to spend four hours in explaining some truths of religion to a young lad who was deaf and dumb.

IX. It is often difficult not to be carried away by a false zeal; or (to speak more truly) by an irritated temper, or by impatience under the cloak of zeal which leads you to deal roughly with a penitent who wearies you. You may make the excuse to yourself, that you only seek to shew him the serious character of his fault; but really you are giving way to your own impatience and to your desire to get rid of him, and the consequence will be, that, though you mean to avoid both utter severity and over-easiness, you are almost sure to fall into one or other extreme; either by dismissing your penitent as unfit for absolution, which is severity; or giving him hasty absolution to get rid of him, which is over-laxity. It is not always easy to find out the delusions brought upon us by impatience. With the over-lax confessor (*relâché*) they take the shape of charity, which fears to weary the penitent with questions, to make him shun the Sacrament of penance, if he finds it too hard to obtain absolution. On the other hand, with the over

severe Confessor (*rigoriste*), these delusions take the shape of a jealous fear for religion, lest he should degrade the Sacrament by giving it to those who are unworthy. Beware then lest these misgivings prove to spring, not from a holy caution, but from impatience of the trouble to be taken if you would not give hasty absolution, or would prepare the penitent to receive it worthily, rather than send him away through over severity. You may easily fall into laxity or harshness. Both are alike a way of escape from your own weariness.

Remedy
against
impatience
and
weariness.

X. Would you find a means whereby you can relieve your weariness, and keep up that tone of calmness and freedom which is necessary to your office as judge, while it will save you from the snares and delusions of impatience? The true means is to aim at a father's charity and loving-kindness. Make a rule of mistrusting your zeal, whenever it is not accompanied with patience and the love of toil. It is this, says S. Gregory the Great, which makes the difference between the paternal love which is of Christ, and the pharisaical zeal which is that of an hireling: the first is so full of love and compassion for the sinner that it hardly seems to remember or hate the sin; while the other so hates the sin, that compassion seems lost in contempt for the sinner. "Vera justitia compassionem habet, falsa dedignationem"^d.

Charity
which
helps the
penitent to
obtain justification.

XI. But it is not enough, to bear with the penitent. Your charity should help him all through; especially towards the end, so that he may leave his state of sin for a state of grace. Help him, if

^d Hom. xxxiv. in Evang.

he need it, so that he may accuse himself fully of all his faults, in whatever is essential to the due performance of that which he is about. To do this well, you require not merely knowledge and patience, but a certain skill of which I will speak hereafter, under the head of your duty as a Physician of souls. But help your penitent at the last especially, inasmuch as it is the characteristic of a good father to save his child's life at all hazards. Not that I would have you absolve your penitent hastily. That would not be to seek his real good. But I would have you labour according to his need to produce hearty contrition and firm resolutions to amend in his soul; so that he may leave you justified, though he came a grievous sinner. True charity will inspire you with gentleness or severity, as they are required. Take an analogous case in the outer life. Suppose that a sick child refuses its medicines, or can only be made to take them or to avoid what is hurtful by perpetual discussion and persuasion, the most devoted attendants will weary of the strife, and, yielding to the child's caprice, they will cease to press the necessary remedies upon him; their selfishness being greater than their love for the child. But the child's parents would not yield thus; because their real love for him is free from all considerations of personal inconvenience, and they will use every means to save him, though they would fain make the healing treatment as bearable as may be. Yet if tenderness will not succeed, they can be firm and even severe, enforcing what is necessary with a firm hand. Love gives that firmness, which is tempered by Love. So it is in the case of confess-

ion. The Confessor who is moved by paternal love, avoids laxity and harshness; either of which will easily put an end to his labour by absolving or dismissing the penitent to his soul's detriment. A paternal heart seeks and uses every possible means to heal the penitent and restore him to a state of grace; while the Confessor who has not this love of souls, will not do his work well, however learned he may be, because he does not know how to apply his knowledge usefully.

Disinter-
ested Cha-
rity.

XII. But do not fall into the error of believing that, in order to avoid the laxity to which self-love leads you or which is prompted by any human respect or by your liking for your penitent, your charity need suffer any loss. It rather needs purifying and strengthening, so that greater courage and increased heavenly-mindedness may enable you to think of nothing save the spiritual gain of your penitent, to forward which you will conquer all difficulties. Consider the difference between the good shepherd and the hireling, who, when he finds the lost sheep, is content to recall it to the fold without taking any precautions lest it stray anew. This is the lax confessor. Or else he beats the wanderer, and drives it harshly into the fold, regardless of its terror, which may make it fly still further into peril. Such is the too severe Confessor. Neither is a good shepherd, inasmuch as both sacrifice the sheep to their own convenience. But the good shepherd, when he has found the sheep, does not strike it: he does not leave it in perilous freedom, but holding it carefully himself, he takes good care that it should not escape; he even carries it on his shoulders, regardless of dis-

tance and weariness, until at last he joyfully restores it safe and sound to the fold. Be sure that the only good Pastor is the Confessor who is full of paternal love. Armed with the judge's knowledge and the physician's skill, he seizes and saves the penitent; neither scaring him with severity, or making him careless by laxity; but bearing willingly much of his fatigue, welcoming, supporting him in every way; so that, when once the necessary frame of mind has been won, he may be pardoned and comforted.

XIII. Thus you see, to be a really good confessor Signs of this Charity. it is not enough to be a great theologian or a rigid ascetic. You require moreover to be filled with charity, and that, not the charity of a hireling, but of a father and of a good shepherd. Practically the office of a Confessor, which seems so easy, is most difficult. It binds you to three things. 1. to acquire a high moral tone as judge, and great skill as physician. 2. to use both carefully for the penitent's welfare. 3. to take upon yourself a great deal of labour, so that the wandering sheep may not be tempted to hate both fold and shepherd, and fly both for ever; but being won by your love, which turns the smart of confession into sweetness, it may gladly return often, and so be kept in God's paths.

XIV. I have spoken of keeping your penitent in God's paths; but I would go a step further, and bid you *lead him to perfection*, as the final effort of your love. Many a soul relapses into the snares of the enemy, through the neglect of confessors, who have not warned the penitent of dangers to be shunned, or taught him how to maintain and confirm habits of devotion: many also remain, all their lives after a Charity, leading to perfection

languid fashion in the very doorway to the spiritual life, who have every facility for being led on towards a more perfect way, if they were but taught and animated with the desire to seek it. Strengthen your own zeal in this important work, by reminding yourself, that sometimes God receives greater glory through one person who serves Him perfectly, than through a thousand who, though not guilty of heinous sin, only serve Him with a lukewarm passive service; that a whole family, or a still larger flock, will often receive more spiritual benefit, and their sanctification be more really advanced, by one earnest man who is indefatigable in example, in counsel, in teaching, in zeal; than by more numerous teachers who are cold and inexperienced. If you train one father of a family to daily self-examination, to habits of frequent devotion, to daily meditation or, at all events, spiritual reading, to the habit of frequent recollection through the day, that his end and aim is Heaven, to self-denial, in things permitted as well as in such as are forbidden, to the regular practice of public devotion; will not such a head of the family be a mighty channel of sanctification to his children and servants? Nor will the good influence stop there. For these again, as they disperse in the world, will carry the result of their good training into fresh households; so that when you were bestowing your time and labour in leading that one penitent towards perfection, you were really assisting many souls besides his own. What means, what system must you use, for so desirable an end? We shall return to this subject, which has been treated by Scaramelli in his *Directoire Ascétique*, where we find a sound and

learned theory, united with most practical advice to the Director.

XV. A ^b Confessor who frightens his unlucky penitents by harshness and untimely reproof is greatly to blame. He ought on the contrary to maintain a calm mind, a gentle expression, and a kindly manner which may attract penitents, and induce them to feel that everything he does is for their good. Teach them so that they may listen and submit willingly to you. Say; "My child, you have now for years been grovelling in the dust; you cannot have given any proof of amendment, inasmuch as you nearly always bring the same story to your Confessors, a sure proof that hitherto you have been wanting in hearty contrition and true purpose of amendment. Thus there is great reason to fear lest your Confessions have all been useless or even sacrilegious; and surely you would not like always to risk your salvation thus? For your own welfare, and in order that you may arouse in your heart a sincere contrition which may lead to true conversion, I exhort, I intreat you for the love of your own soul, to make a vigorous effort to gain the mastery over yourself. Perform some slight penance, say the penitential Psalms or a Litany daily with an act of contrition; make a firm resolution each morning not to sin during the day, and each evening not to sin during the night. Try every day to think a few moments about death, hell, and eternity; especially when any temptation comes upon you. Say instantly, 'Jesus, have mercy on me;' or some similar ejaculatory prayer, calling God to your aid. The result will astonish you."—

Charity
must be
discreet
and pru-
dent.

^b B. Leonard n. 15.

“But, father, supposing I were to die meanwhile?”

“Well, that thought should add to your repentance, because in your present doubtful state, there might be great danger lest, in spite of my absolution, you would be lost; whereas, if you make an act of contrition with a firm intention to correct your faults and to come for absolution at the time appointed, we might reasonably hope, that even were death to take you suddenly, you would still be saved. Be brave then, my son, never fear but that I will deal with you as a father. I will not chide you, I will comfort you, and I am certain you will thank me for it in this world and in the next.” Experience proves that, if you treat your penitents with such tender charity, they both submit patiently to deferred absolution, and are greatly benefited by it. I do not mean you to expect that they can all at once conquer some inveterate habit; I would only require that they should honestly make a strong effort to conquer it. If they fall more rarely than usual during the interval, then give absolution. Such falls are owing rather to weakness than to malice; and even this slight resistance proves, “*adest spes emendationis.*” This prudential line equally avoids the mistake of those who relax their priestly zeal, under the excuse of gentleness, and that of a severity which embitters charity itself. Let us heartily follow it, and unite in a holy league whence our flocks will reap priceless benefits. Your penitents will prove their gratitude by their thankfulness. I have often heard it said with tears; “Oh Father, if at first I had but found a charitable Confessor who would have delayed giving me absolution a little while, and have treated me as

kindly as you have done, I should not have sinned so much, or have come to my present state." Let us then follow in this saintly path, and be sure that guided by these rules, and by true prudence, we shall help many a soul to win Paradise; but let those Confessors who adopt the opposite course, beware, lest they hinder the salvation of souls!

XVI.* The true fatherly Confessor must be full of charity then; and he must shew it by receiving all who come to him, the poor, the ignorant, the greatest sinners. Some will even receive only those who are of a pious disposition; or persons whom from worldly considerations they dare not reject, while they listen reluctantly to a poor sinner, and dismiss him harshly. The consequence is that such a penitent, who perhaps made a great effort in coming to confession, is frightened and disgusted by such a repulse; and despairing of help and absolution, very likely he will give way to temptation, and end in despair. But a good Confessor acts far otherwise. If such a penitent seeks his aid, he receives him gladly and kindly, "quasi victor capta præda," rejoicing to rescue a soul from Satan. He knows that in truth the Sacrament of reconciliation was instituted, not for pious souls, but for sinners; for, as we know, venial faults do not require sacramental absolution. He knows that our Lord said, "'Non veni vocare justos, sed peccatores.'" So that "putting on bowels of mercies" (as saith the Apostle), the greater the depth, in which the sinner is plunged, so much greater is the confessor's charity and desire to win him for God. "Courage," such

Before
Confes-
sion.

* S. Liguori. No. 2-5.

† S. Mark ii. 17.

an one will say, "do not be afraid, make a good confession. Tell me everything without restraint, do not keep back anything through shame. Thank God for having spared you till now : now is the time for you to begin a new life. Do not fear but that God will certainly forgive you, if you are honest in your intentions. He has waited so long in order to forgive you. Come, speak bravely and with confidence."

During the
Confes-
sion.

XVII. Still even more charity is required on the confessor's part, while he is hearing the confession : he must give good heed not to shew any impatience, or weariness, or amazement at the faults confessed, though of course, in the case of a penitent who was indifferent and hard enough to confess many serious sins without testifying shame or regret, it would be needful to call his attention to their number and weight. In such a case correction is necessary to awaken him from his lethargy. As a rule, theologians say, that the confessor should refrain from administering any correction during the course of a confession, for fear of frightening his penitent, who might in consequence keep back some faults ; but there are exceptions to this rule. Thus for instance, when the penitent confesses some unusually great sin, or one that has become habitual, it is often better not to pass it over, but to pause and suggest some few earnest considerations in order to make him feel the serious nature of the evil, yet not to irritate or frighten him. Thus, having given him such reproof as is necessary, the confessor should take pains to encourage his penitent, so that he may tell the rest of his faults honestly :

“Be of good courage, you intend heartily to renounce this terrible sin, do you not? I am sure of it. Do not be afraid, tell me all, do not keep anything on your conscience. You would not willingly commit sacrilege? that would be worse than all that has gone before. Tell everything bravely, make a good confession, and God will forgive you.”

XVIII. Here again the Confessor should use double earnestness in pressing upon his penitent the weight and the multitude of his faults, and the state of reprobation in which he is; but still always with charity. He may use stronger expressions, in order to force the penitent to see himself in a true light: but it must be evident throughout, that everything is said, not from indignation, but purely out of compassion and charity. He may say, “My son, do you not see that this is the life of a reprobate? Tell me, what has our Lord done to you that you recompense Him so ill? You could not do more, were He your greatest enemy; and yet He died for you! Think, if you had died this night, what would have been your lot? An eternity in Hell! What remains to you of all the sins you have committed? Hell in your heart, and hell everlasting. Take courage then, my son, and begin anew. You have grieved God long enough, turn to Him now. I will do all in my power to help you; come to me, as often as you will; strive now to become holy, and to be happy. There is no happiness so great as to be in God’s grace.” S. François de Sales’ favourite method of attracting a sinner to God was to set vividly before him the happiness of such as are in a state of grace, and the misery of those who live estranged from God. After these exhorta-

The close
of the
Confes-
sion.

tions, the Confessor will help his penitent to make an act of contrition, and, if satisfied as to his fitness, he will give him absolution, instructing him how to correct himself; of which more hereafter. If absolution cannot be given, or it seems better to defer it, the Confessor will appoint a time for his penitent to return, saying, "I shall expect you on such a day; do not fail to come. Do not be afraid, commend yourself to our dear Lord and come to me. If I am in the place where I usually receive confessions, come there to me; if not, send for me, and I will leave everything to attend to you." You must dismiss him gently thus. It is the only way to get hold of sinners; if they fall into the hands of a severe confessor, who treats them harshly, they will revolt against confession, forsake the Sacraments, and all is lost.

Devoted
Charity.

XIX.^s It is evident then that confessors should receive all who come to them with the greatest readiness and ease, not only not sending any away, or shewing any reluctance in word or manner, but ever shewing that they take real pleasure and comfort in toiling for the good of souls, and in counselling them. Thus, in order that no one may be able to excuse himself from confession, especially at the stated times, by any difficulty in finding a confessor, I warn you that, however you may be called away by funeral or other offices, you should never give up hearing confessions at the most usual times, except as an absolute necessity.

Charity in
assisting
souls to
persevere
and ad-
vance in
virtue.

XX. As true spiritual Fathers, good confessors ought to take special pains in teaching and forwarding all their penitents in Christian virtue, and in the

§ S. Charles p. 8-10. 64-70.

spiritual life; especially such as have chosen them as directors, and habitually confess to them or consult them as to their soul's health. A good Confessor will try to confirm those who are under his spiritual guidance in such faith, that they should be ready to lose all earthly advantages, nay, life itself, sooner than offend God by mortal sin, and should be filled with an ardent desire to conform themselves in all things to His Holy Will. To this end he will teach his penitents, that man and all creation are destined to serve and obey God in this life, and rejoice eternally in the next, so that every one ought to resolve to labour carefully for this end, and only prize such things as lead us nearer to it, turning aside from all that hinders it. Further, he will lead his penitents always to seek this end of their own accord, directing all their actions and hopes to it, so that their whole manner of life, their dress, conversation, occupations, and all else should bear the stamp; and everything in its turn serve as a stepping-stone thitherwards; the penitent meanwhile being ready to conform his use of the things of this world, even to a total renunciation, as his spiritual guide may judge to be necessary for his salvation. The spiritual guide, on his part, will study the circumstances and character of each individual, and will accordingly guide each towards this end. Thus he must teach those whose guidance is in his hands, how to pray, accustoming them to use pious exercises at least twice a day—at night and morning; as also to communicate regularly and to assist at the sacred offices of the Church on festivals. He will specially train all who are able to learn, whether men or women, in the

practice of mental prayer ; teaching others to say devoutly the Seven Penitential Psalms, and other prayers ; leading every one to practise self-examination, fixing a suitable hour for it. He will exhort them diligently to frequent the sacraments, striving to lead them, according to S. Augustine's precept, to weekly Communion. Where he finds persons who are not prepared for this, he will gradually lead them to it, exhorting them at first to come to confession and Communion at the principal seasons ; such as (besides Easter) Michaelmas, All Saints, Christmas, and the first Sunday in Lent, so as to prepare themselves for that holy fast ; and so leading them on to a monthly Communion, from which the advance to a weekly frequentation of the Sacraments will not be difficult. Confessors should take care that those under their guidance use holy-days rightly to God's service and honour, to which end it is well to induce them to join some one of the confraternities established with this object ; they will also urge upon the heads of families the duty of training their children in God's holy fear, causing them to be duly instructed in Christian doctrine, and taking them to church to hear instructions and vespers ; as well as bringing them up in the habit of Confession and Communion. Further the Confessor will press upon married people the duty of leading one another to frequent the Sacraments, reminding them what S. Paul says concerning the unbelieving husband being sanctified by his believing wife, and the unbelieving wife by the believing husband. Such as can read, will be admonished to procure some spiritual books, in order

to read them to the assembled family, especially on holy days. Such books as the Lives of the Saints, the Imitation, S. Louis of Grenada's works, the Spiritual exercises, the Practice of mental Prayer, and similar writings are suitable for this purpose. He will often set before those who are rich, that they are but God's stewards, and that, while they may rightly live according to the position in which He has placed them, they are bound to use their wealth with care and moderation, never exceeding their means, but rather keeping within limit. He will also press the stringent duty of almsgiving, in which it is well to be guided by the advice of persons capable of assisting them. In short the director ought to give to each individual under his care such instructions and such assistance as may be most needful in order to their progress in the spiritual life.

XXI.^b Seek to have an ardent longing for the salvation of souls, above all for those who come to confession, intreating God for their conversion and spiritual progress. Never forget that as, at the outset of their confession, the penitents call you Father, so you are bound to have a paternal feeling for them; receiving them with love, bearing patiently with their ignorance, their foolishness, their tediousness and other weaknesses; never wearying in your help and encouragement, while there is a hope of amendment. S. Bernard says that the pastor's care should not be for the stronger souls, which can help themselves, but for the weak and

Active and
compassionate
Charity.

^b S. François de Sales, t. ii. p. 622. Edit. 1836, and Esprit de S. F. de Sales.

feeble, who need to be led and borne up. So, when the prodigal son returned from his swinish companions, naked and soiled, his Father nevertheless fell upon his neck, kissing him and weeping, forgetting all save the tenderness of his paternal heart.

S. F. de
Sales' own
practice.

XXII. In these counsels, S. François de Sales unconsciously described his own practice. S. Chantal who knew him better than anyone else says; "Our blessed founder was altogether incomparable as to his charity in the Confessional and the zeal with which he exercised that ministry. He was wont to give himself up to it without any limit save the wants of those who sought him; and would leave everything, except any important matter concerning God's glory, for it, esteeming that Sacrament as the great means of gaining souls. On Sundays and holy-days, crowds of people came to him, lords and ladies, tradespeople, soldiers, servants, peasants, beggars, sick people, some suffering from most offensive complaints. He received them all without the least respect of persons, with equal love and gentleness; never rejecting anyone however low their condition. On the contrary, I think, he received the poor and abject with more tenderness than the rich and pleasing, saying that therein lay true charity. Nor did he despise children, but received them so lovingly, that they rejoiced to come again to him. He gave his penitents plenty of time to speak freely, never hurrying them; and was always so ready to receive them, not at the appointed times only, that he would, for this purpose, leave the Cathedral offices, delay the Celebration even after he was vested, or quit his meals just as he was going to table, greatly

to the annoyance of his servants. Sometimes on special occasions, jubilees or high festivals, he would hear confessions all day and night. I once saw him quite overwhelmed with the toil ; but he only said to me ; ‘These days are worth their weight in gold because of all these confessions ;’ And he was wont to encourage his penitents by saying, ‘make no difference between your heart and mine ; I belong wholly to you, our souls are equal.’ He would weep with them over their sins, shewing such great loving-kindness, that they could not but melt before it. On one occasion he wrote to me ; ‘We have had a grand jubilee which has kept me fully occupied, but much consoled by several general confessions and outpourings of conscience, so that with tears of joy and love I have harvested among our penitents.’ Another time he wrote ; ‘Four days ago I received to confession and into the bosom of the Church, a gentleman, twenty years of age. O my Saviour, what joy it was to see him accusing himself of all his sins with such piety, and to see God’s Providence in His special and hidden dealings with this soul ! I was almost beside myself. How tenderly I embraced him !’ When he knew that any one found great difficulty in making their confession, either through shame or fear, he tried all means to open their heart and win their confidence. ‘Am I not your father ?’ he would ask ; and when he had got the penitent to say, yes ; ‘Then will you not tell me everything ? God requires of you to open your heart, His Arms are open to receive you. I stand as God’s representative to you, and you are ashamed before me ? But I too am a sinner, and if you had

committed every conceivable sin, I should feel no astonishment.' Often he would assist his penitents to explain their sins, when he saw that they were hindered by ignorance or shame.

XXIII. "After Confession, he would say such encouraging words, 'Oh how dear your soul is to me, and all that you have made known to me, the Angels are rejoicing over this work, and I, with them, congratulate you, but nevertheless you must promise our dear Lord and me too, not to return to your sins.' When he saw that a penitent was wanting in contrition, he would draw them to it, saying, 'You wish that you had never offended God, do you not?' Sometimes he would make a penitent repeat something already confessed, in order to overcome the repugnance to tell it. He imposed very light penances, and would say, 'You will do what I tell you, will you not? then say so and so;' which was generally some simple vocal prayer. He did not give meditations on a mystery or such things for penance. He did not say much when hearing confessions, except to remove vain scruples, or to enlighten penitents as to what was and what was not sin; but what he did say went closer to their hearts than a more lengthy discourse would have done, so that people left him with fresh courage, and often with great recollection and drawing towards God.

"He liked people to be clear, simple, and unaffected in their confessions, telling his penitents that they must explain the motives which led to their faults, and that they must not confess carelessly, but lay bare all the sources and movements of their sins to their confessor, as, without so doing, their consciences

could not be purified. By this zealous resolution to purify souls through confession, he rooted out many bad passions which might have been untouched by a different method of treatment. His marvellous sympathy opened the most reluctant hearts, extracted the evil hidden within, and confirmed them in good dispositions and resolutions. His wondrous resolution and decision in clearing away doubts and scruples of conscience were such as to inspire a perfect peace within the soul and assist its growth in grace. It would be impossible to say what a number of people the Saint led on towards Christian perfection; only those could believe it, who like ourselves have seen his penitents inspired, as they were, with ardent longings for a better way of life or for Christian perfection. Everybody who went in a right mind to him came away greatly benefited, and with the desire to seek him again, to which end they joined and encouraged one another. I have seen this both at Paris where he used to confess people in our Church, and at Grenoble, and a crowd of great people of both sexes flocked to him. People used to come from all sides, attracted by his reputation for holiness and gentleness, as well as for his incomparable wisdom in directing souls; so that God alone can tell the infinite number that were won to His service. When it was known that he was to be in a town, or passing through the country at friends' houses, he was called upon everywhere to hear general confessions; and he used to say that people kept the dregs of their conscience, and what they found most difficult to tell, for him; as indeed was most notoriously true.

XXIV. "It was most marvellous to hear him speak

of God and of perfection; his expressions were so precise and clear, that he made the most delicate and hidden points of the spiritual life easy to be understood. Nor was his light hid under a bushel; it was well known that God had given him a special talent for the guidance of souls, which he guided with a heavenly wisdom. He penetrated the depth of hearts, and saw clearly into their condition and ruling motives; while his love of souls, and his delight in working for them was evidently boundless. He was quite indefatigable, and never rested till he had given them peace, and led their consciences into a state of safety; while for weak sinners, who yet longed to be converted, there was nothing he would not do. He made himself one with such, weeping over their sins, so identifying himself with his penitents, that they could conceal nothing from him. Indeed I should say the predominant virtue of our saintly Father was zeal for souls; so that at times you would almost have said that he left God's more immediate service for that of his neighbour. What tenderness, gentleness, patience, toil! a toil which at last consumed him.*"

The Saint literally fulfilled the precept, "Give to him that asketh." He was not merely liberal, but prodigal of spiritual food, never refusing spiritual consolation to any who asked it, either in private or public, dreading lest he should incur the reproach; "The little ones ask bread, and no man giveth unto them." He possessed an inexhaustible store of the bread of life and strength, and rejoiced to distribute

* Divers suppléments aux Œuvres de S. F. de Sales, recueillis par l'abbé de Baudry 1837. p. 160 sqq. et p. 233.

it. Once when he was intreated to take care of his health, his answer was; "Ought we not to give body and soul for our dear neighbours, whom our dear Lord so loved, that He died for love of them?" "If his bodily strength had been equal to that of his mind," says Père Talon, one of his biographers, "he would daily and hourly have gone from one pole to the other to comfort the afflicted and win souls to God. In such work he never spared himself; as on one occasion when he went more than sixty miles to confess an old man who wanted him, and who had said that he would make his confession to no one else. *Anima, tanti vales!*" Sometimes he was so grieved at the little charity shewn to sinners that he would say, "Only our Dear Lord and I love sinners!"

Once during a visitation, serious complaints were brought against an ecclesiastic who dishonoured his office by a scandalous life. The culprit boldly came to S. Francis, denying all accusations, which he treated as calumnies. The Saint received him with his wonted benignity; but, on perceiving his audacity, blushed for the sinner, who, without further admonition, was so touched by the Bishop's countenance, that he intreated to be heard at the tribunal of penitence. The Saint forthwith inclined not his ear only, but his heart also. The sinner issuing forth from the healing discipline as Naaman from the waters of Jordan, full of that holy shame which leads to salvation, exclaimed, "Well, Monseigneur, what do you think of the greatest sinner living?" "I think, my brother," the Saint replied, "that God has shed His mercy largely upon you; you seem to me all radiant

with His grace." "But you know what I am?" "You are what I say;" answered the saint. "I meant, what I have been." "Of that I remember nothing," S. Francis replied; "why should I recollect what God has forgotten? would you have me resemble the Pharisee who treated Magdalene as the sinner she once was, when she was washing her Saviour's feet with her tears? To prove to you," he added, "that I see you as filled with heavenly grace, poured in upon your soul, I beg you to give me your blessing;" whereupon he knelt before his penitent, who was overcome with confusion. "Indeed I mean it," the Saint said, "I ask you to do for me what I have done for you and to hear my confession." After some contest, S. Francis carried his point, greatly to the edification of his late penitent; and in order to shew that he really considered this ecclesiastic reinstated, the holy Bishop confessed to him two or three times afterwards, much to the wonder of the people, who indeed were almost as much lost in admiration of the miraculous conversion of the sinner as of so astonishing an exhibition of humility in the Saint.

XXV. It is a rule among directors, not to interrupt a confession by any correction, but there are occasional exceptions, and one such we find recorded of the saintly Bishop of Geneva. A certain penitent detailed his sins with such effrontery and indifference, that he seemed rather to be telling a story, than accusing himself. S. Francis, perceiving this grievous want of true penitence, begun to sigh and weep, until at last the offender inquired, what ailed him? "Alas! my brother, I am well, thank God," was the

reply, "but I fear, you ail greatly." "Not at all." "Go on then." Still were heavy sins told with undiminished levity, and the Saint wept freely. Once again the hardened penitent asked, why he shed tears? "Alas!" replied S. Francis, "because you do not weep!" The rod struck the rock; he wept that he had not wept, while his sins drew forth the tears of the innocent; he had fainted, but that S. Francis comforted and prepared him to receive the grace of the Sacrament; from that time he gave himself up to God, and became a model of penitence.

XXVI.^b S. Philip Neri was so assiduous in the tribunal of penance, that he often gave great part of the night as well as the day to this work. Often before break of day he had confessed several penitents in his own room, and he used to leave the key of his door where they could find it, and so come to him when they would. He forbade any one to be sent away on the plea that he was resting, or could not see people. On one occasion Father Antonio Gallonio stopped some one from going to S. Philip, thinking the intrusion specially inconvenient, but he met with a sharp rebuke and the question, "Do you not know that I would have no hour or moment for myself?" A similar anecdote is told, how he rebuked one of his disciples who had allowed a penitent to wait, fearing to trouble the Saint. S. Philip was wont to go to his confessional directly that the Church was open, and remain there till he said Mass towards noon, unless some important business obliged him to leave, in which case he always left word where he was going. If no penitents came,

^b Vie de S. Philippe de Néri L. x. and L. ii. 6.

he still remained near the confessional, saying his office, or reading; or sometimes walking about, in order that it might be known where he was; and that no one might have any difficulty in finding him. When he was ill, nothing save positive medical orders could keep him from this duty; and if asked, why he took so much trouble, he would answer, "It is no trouble, it is a pleasure and rest to me." His object was this to kindle his penitents' fervour, and not give them any pretext for slackening their devotion by any difficulty in finding him.

XXVII. On one occasion, some of his priests remonstrated with him for not sparing himself more; but he replied, "Some of my most pious penitents have been gained to the Lord by waiting for their conversion, even through the night. Believe me nothing is so sweet to souls that love God, as to leave Jesus for Jesus."

In truth S. Philip was ready to go through any fatigue, bad weather, or even danger, when there was a soul to win for Christ. He received all, rich and poor, young and old, learned and ignorant, alike, with a fatherly kindness; giving the same friendly reception to strangers as to those he had known long; weeping over sinners and the offences they had committed towards God with the simplicity of a child, as Cardinal Borromeo testified. Two years before his death, when 78 years of age, S. Philip not only wept over the dangerous delusions of a person in whom he was interested, but said "Old as I am, I will still many times take the discipline for you."

On another occasion S. Philip perceived that a certain young man was deceiving his usual Confessor,

and concealing some sins out of shame. The youth chanced one day to be alone in S. Philip's room, and the Saint after looking fixedly at him, began to weep, whereupon the young man's heart was touched by God's grace, and the two wept silently awhile, after which the contrite youth poured out a full confession of all he had kept back, and was tenderly instructed and comforted by the Saint.

XXVIII. In the same way S. Philip reclaimed a very profligate youth, on whom he laid no heavier burthen than daily to say a short prayer six times, and to kiss the ground, saying, "To-morrow I may be dead." The young man obeyed, was converted, and fourteen years later he died a holy death. By such gentle means as these S. Philip won many a sinner into the path of holiness. Many a one, on his death-bed, blessed the day and hour when he first knew Father Philip; and others likened his attraction for souls to the magnet drawing the needle, saying that those who had once confessed to him, experienced an irresistible desire to seek him again. He did not approve of confessors who made the strait path too hard, especially with newly converted souls; or of confessors who were harsh and over-severe in their treatment of penitents; urging them rather to win souls by love and patience, and not to forbid unimportant luxuries, (as for instance in the dress of the noblemen and ladies of his day), for fear of disgusting them altogether with the duty of Confession. He preferred waiting till time led naturally to the reformation desired. "We must bear with these mental infirmities," he was wont to say, "as we are forced to do with those of the body: when once these souls

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have attained some true earnestness, they are as ready to cast all these things aside as their confessor can wish." Thus, once when a lady asked if she dressed over-much, the Saint's only answer was "Take care not to fall." And one day, laying his hand on the shoulder of a young nobleman, he remarked playfully, "I could embrace you oftener, if your gold lace did not hurt me so !" The lady moderated her toilette, and the youth his gold lace. Many people criticised and blamed this gentle line of treatment, but experience proved that by it S. Philip won more souls to God than his critics did with their severity and rigour^b.

^b It is worthy of note that later on the holy Bishop of Geneva was also reproached with over-easiness. God is the Judge.

ARTICLE II.

THE PHYSICIAN'S SKILL.

XXIX. The pastor *who would be really useful to his flock must combine an enlightened intellect with a tender heart ; and the confessor who has only a father's charity, without the judge's knowledge and the physician's skill, may wish to succour souls, but he will not know how to do so. For the present we will leave the judge's knowledge, and speak of the physician's skill which you must acquire for very love's sake. And this you will gain less from moral writers than from ascetics. Asceticism imparts a marvellous strength to morality in treating the spiritual cure and perfection of penitents, as I would strive to set forth in the ensuing treatise on the use you should make thereof in the tribunal of penitence.

XXX. The first use of your skill is adroitness in discovering where the evil lies. The great thing to fear in spiritual infirmities, is that they will not be laid bare with sincerity: on one side nature revolts against doing so ; on the other the devil uses every possible artifice to increase the difficulty of perfect openness. For this reason you should not be content merely to encourage your penitent at first by your paternal kindness: but, all the time you are listen-

Whence
this skill
comes.

Skill in dis-
covering
the peni-
tents' dis-
ease.

* Prêtre Sanctifié, No. 16-20. 24-27, 36-37.

ing to his confession, you should try to prevent his being hindered by shame from a full self-accusation. Any sign of surprise at great or unusual sins, a sigh, an agitated manner, any appearance of weariness, hurrying him on,—in short any word or sign of impatience,—may suffice to hinder his sincerity. For the same reason, however well you know the penitent, do not shew that you know him, unless he begins by saying who he is: he may possibly have come with the hope of not being recognized. If you receive him elsewhere than in the confessional, let your hand conceal your face while hearing his confession, lest his embarrassment and shame should be augmented by the consciousness that you are looking at him; and for the same reason invariably defer all remonstrance and setting forth of his duties until the confession is ended, and you are sure he has nothing more to say. This rule should be invariable, except under certain special circumstances, where your discretion prompts you to act differently.

Skill in discovering what the penitent does not tell.

XXXI. You must know how to use that which your penitent does tell you, in order to discover what he does not. If, for instance, he accuses himself of great hatred towards some one, you, who know the natural results of such a passion, must question him as to whether he has slandered the persons he hates, whether he has wished harm to happen to them, whether he refuses to see them, although they may be his near relations, and thereby scandal be given to those who are aware of his conduct. In your interrogations, it is always well to assume that the faults both in kind and in number are more serious than they actually are, so that the penitent may

more readily acknowledge the truth, since it is easier for him to justify himself by owning to less, than to humble himself by enlarging upon your suggestions. Yet further, your skill ought to be such that you can detect what is amiss, not merely from what is half-confessed, but even where nothing has been said ; even where the penitent denies everything, while nevertheless circumstances give you good reason to fear that he is concealing or denying the truth out of a blamable ignorance or shame. “*Diligens inquisitor et subtilis investigator sapienter et quasi astute interrogat a pœnitente quod forsitan ignorat, vel præ verecundia velit occultare.*”—If he partially own the truth, do not then find fault with him, but go on seeking his further errors or the frequency of such as he owns, and then reassure him, saying kindly, “Are you not glad that I have made you confess these sins? Speak the truth : at first unhappily you were betrayed into falsehood, but by God’s grace towards you, instead of believing your denials, I have helped you to tell the truth. Be comforted ; it is a proof that God wills your forgiveness. But now be honest with me, have you not before this kept back some such sins in other confessions? Well, notwithstanding, do not be afraid ; we will remedy that : you shall make all these imperfect confessions over again. You are not prepared to do so to-day, with all the confusion of these falsehoods upon you ; but let us take a week or ten days for your soul’s welfare, during which time you will say the prayers and follow the rules I shall give you. In preparing for your general confession, try to class all the sins of one kind together, so as to confess them, not one by

one, but collectively, saying, 'I have committed such a sin, about so many times.' Or if you are unable to remember nearly how often you have committed it, say how long you have given way to the sin, as for instance, how many years; and the frequency of the fall, as, 'I fell into it about so many times a month, week, or day,' and that will do. Come back on the appointed day: I will help you as to the special circumstances, and every thing else: you will be greatly comforted."

A wise
judgment
concerning
the peni-
tent's guilt.

XXXII. Many a soul owes its healing and saving to such painstaking. The importance of combining the physician's skill with a father's tenderness can scarcely be overrated.

XXXIII. When you have probed your penitent's wounds skilfully and discovered his disease, the next thing you have to do, is to form a right judgment concerning him, so that you may apply the fittest remedies. There is a wide difference between the proper treatment of a sin which has become habitual, like a gangrene, and that suitable to an accidental sin; as again between a danger which is imminent, and one more remote. Certain very serious sins require an altogether different treatment from common daily sins. If your penitent confesses a serious fault, which nevertheless was plainly accidental, e. g. if he has used very bad language to some one who struck him as they passed one another, do not worry him with questions. But if the temptation is a permanent one, and the sin has been committed several times since his last confession, you have good reason for misgivings. In such a case, investigate whether the evil is more

serious than it appears at first; and to this end, question the penitent carefully: e. g. "Your last confession was of these same sins, and it had been so for long? You had already sinned with respect to that same person? Last Easter too, you had not confessed for a year, had you?" Then, in proportion to the sin, you must apply the remedy. While the evil is new, it is often easily eradicated; but when once it becomes confirmed, a cure is far more difficult; the skilful physician must learn to find out the first symptoms and check them. This was what S. Philip Neri did. When his penitents accused themselves for acts of familiarity with persons of another sex on the ground that they had no bad intentions and experienced no temptations, he answered; "That is the worst part of it, that you do not feel yourself tempted; it shews that Satan means to take advantage of your imprudence to lead you into grievous faults: he hangs back now, in order that, as you go incautiously on, he may attack you suddenly, and overthrow you." Accordingly when you see, e. g. the passion for gambling rising up in a young man, or that of vanity in a girl, anticipate the evil which too probably will ensue, and give counsel accordingly. Induce the young man to check his growing inclinations, rather by your advice than by a severe prohibition of what may not in itself be a great evil as yet; advise him to restrain the taste by abstaining from play on Fridays, in memory of Our Saviour's Passion; or at least to moderate the time and money spent in gambling. In the same way advise the girl to conquer her vanity by laying aside some of the ornaments she has de-

lighted in, and sometimes to wear her least costly or becoming dresses. There are some sins, whose abiding nature one has rather to dread than their numerical increase. Small in themselves, their persistency becomes very hurtful. Such for instance, are personal dislikes which have merely the effect of causing one to avoid meeting the person disliked, speaking but little or stiffly to him; if however such an occasion becomes habitual, it may lead to great danger by the loss of God's grace, especially in persons professing piety. Thus the priest Sapricius having long maintained a bitterness towards Nicephorus, a layman, was led by it to fail at the moment of martyrdom: he renounced the faith, and died in apostasy. Learn then to estimate at its due value the evil which you find in your penitent.

Prudence
in apply-
ing the re-
medies.

XXXIV. It is specially in this that the physician's skill must be displayed. If it is requisite to conquer hardness of heart, and to kindle in your penitent that sorrow for sin without which the Sacrament of penance is useless, that zeal which you restrained during the confession, may fitly be employed for the culprit's benefit. But still let your charity be predominant, so that he may be willing to hear what you have to say. "Sæpe plus erga corrigendos agit benevolentia quam auctoritas, plus exhortatio quam comminatio, plus caritas quam potestas." Begin with congratulating the penitent on having made a good Confession, and then, as confidence is most important in order to induce him to do what is so difficult, encourage him to hope for forgiveness, if he will but repent heartily. The best way to succeed is by inducing him to judge himself with a view to that pardon, which God will

not refuse him. Then set briefly, but clearly before him, the inducements to hearty repentance which our faith holds forth;—shame, fear, trust, and love.

1. Reprove him, not for each separate sin, if he has confessed many, but for the principal ones, pointing out their number and gravity, making him feel how inexcusable they are in a Christian and a child of God. 2. Set before him the chastisements he deserves from that All-Powerful and Good God, to Whom he has been so ungrateful;—chastisements which must come upon him, and may be near at hand, unless he repents heartily. 3. Point out the equally certain advantages of confession;—pardon, peace, a happy death, everlasting life. Appeal to his imagination; set before him how, while he is yet spared, hell contains a multitude of souls lost by reason of sins possibly less heinous than his own; recal God's blessings and mercies which he has repaid with disobedience and ingratitude; point out how, while threatening him with deserved punishment, God is yet ready to forgive and accept him, if he will but perceive how he has injured, not himself only but his Heavenly Father likewise, and repent of that more than all else. Teach him to turn to God, crying out, "*Ne projicias me a Facie Tuâ;*" "*Pater, peccavi*&c.—Having reached this point, it will not be difficult to lead him on to a true contrition; setting before him God's great love to us, a love so great that He gave His Life for us; so abundant, that He has overwhelmed us with mercies and blessings; so unselfish, that every past favour is but the earnest of favours to come; all, with the object of bringing us to share His Eternal Blessedness in Heaven. Point

out the other perfections of this infinitely Loving God, His Majesty, His Wisdom, His Power, His Holiness, &c. and how He is worthy of all veneration and love : instead of which we have crucified Him afresh, and covered Him with insults. Lead the penitent, in his hearty sorrow for having made so poor a return to so much Love, to mourn and hate his sins rather because he has offended so good a God, than solely through fear of hell and hope of Heaven.

XXXV. In order to make such instructions profitable, remember ; 1. Not to make use of them with persons whom you know to prepare themselves properly ; or who prove to be duly filled with compunction. In such cases, it is unnecessary. 2. With others, seek and employ the motive most adapted to the individual case. Thus with timid people dwell less on fear, and chiefly on trust in God. 3. Do not let the rank or dignity of your penitents hinder you from urging them to contrition if they are deficient in it, but avoid giving them unnecessary humiliation in so doing ; such circumspection will win for you a paternal and sacred authority, which will make them teachable and docile. Headstrong, obstinate penitents, incapable of reasoning, will be better dealt with by vigorous reproof. But still let all you say be seasoned with charity, so that they may see that you do not despise them. Your zeal for their welfare will open a way to their heart, and you will effect your purpose. If your exhortations to contrition seem unavailing, do not be discouraged ; you have still a weapon which faith teaches us cannot fail ; prayer. You can never sufficiently feel yourself, or inculcate upon your penitents, the

value, the necessity of prayer. There are two ways by which you can make use of this all-powerful means ; 1. during the confession, praying with your penitent, the good result of which is sometimes immediate : 2. if you cannot move him as you desire at the moment, and fear to desecrate absolution, then set him a fixed time for prayer, and tell him what petitions he is to use.

XXXVI. If your penitent is wanting in courage to fulfil his duties, you must not rest satisfied with setting them before him as the clear-sighted judge. You must further, as the skilful physician, know how to use the means and inducements best calculated to overcome his difficulties. If you merely say ; “ You are bound to restore what was taken,...to forsake such and such an occasion of sin ;...to forgive such an injury ; to resist such a temptation ; to break through such a bad habit ; ” &c. your penitent will seldom, if ever, profit by the advice. It is in these cases that you specially require a familiarity with the science of asceticism which deals with temptations and passions ; their first beginnings, their progress, and their fittest remedies ; with virtues, the inducements to seek them, and the means of practising them ; with vices, the reasons for hating them, and the means of avoiding or conquering them. For instance : you have urged upon your penitent the duty of restoring something to his neighbour ; press your advice with the joint inducements of confidence and fear. Say, “ My child, when this money which you owe is paid, God will bless your house and be with your family, but so long as you possess what rightly belongs to another, it cannot fail to bring a curse

Remedies
for weak-
ness.

upon you and yours. Supposing God were to send you a serious illness, it would cost you far more than you will lose by this act of restitution; and God is not to be trifled with. When death comes upon you, all your own property, as well as that which is not your own, will be left behind, but the sin will follow you to the Judgment-seat of God to your condemnation. Remember Zacchæus! He did not say he would restore in the future '*reddam*;' but *now*; '*reddo quadruplum*;' and immediately the answer was vouchsafed to him, '*Hodie huic domui salus facta est.*'" Point out to your penitent the way to carry out his duty; such as the retrenchment of superfluous expences, the sale of some possession, or a gradual payment where he cannot do all at once. Never offer to be yourself the channel of restitution; and if the penitent presses it upon you, always get a receipt, and shew it him, both in order to quiet his conscience and that not a suspicion of self-interest may rest upon you.

Remedies
against
tempta-
tions at
Seasons of
Holy
Communion.

XXXVII. The devil is wont to redouble his efforts to ensnare the faithful on the days of their Communion, with two evil intentions; 1st, through some sin to lessen the benefit to their souls, and to make them unworthy of the Blessed Sacrament; and 2ndly to lessen their value for the Sacraments, which seem to be less efficacious when a fall follows quickly after having received them, and by these snares people are led to neglect the means of grace, and so remain in their sins, shunning the best way of forsaking them. Your office is to warn your penitents that they be specially on their guard, and practise extra vigilance on such days; teach them then that if they fall, it

is due to their own carelessness, not to any deficiency in the Sacraments; and that the best remedy is to seek them anew with increased earnestness and humility. You must continually study the special means for helping your penitents according to their needs. Treatises of moral theology supply the rules to be observed with respect to those who are living in hatred, amid proximate occasions of sin, in undue scrupulosity, in the habit of blasphemy, or who are bound to make restitution. Among other devout practices, it is useful to require, or at all events to advise, short but frequent prayers: e. g. in the morning, at noon, and evening; daily self-examination, or at least a careful act of contrition. If a person is liable to temptations during the night, tell him to cross his hands upon his breast directly that he goes to bed, to reflect that even so he will lie in his coffin and in the grave; and that he may die that very night; to which reflections he should add some short prayer. If nevertheless the temptation comes, or lasts, long prayers being difficult then, let him make some ejaculations, and resolve on certain prayers or good works for the morrow; as for instance to be present at a celebration of the Blessed Sacrament; and then, making the sign of the Cross, let him think about other things, and try to fix his imagination upon temporal matters, so long as they are innocent and of a nature to interest and occupy his mind. It may be well to recommend such persons to join some religious Confraternity, to listen to religious instructions; to say certain prayers near some grave, and to meditate upon death. You will find much that is useful on these subjects, in the writings of ascetic authors.

General
rules as to
treatment
of sin-sick
souls whe-
ther rich or
poor.

XXXVIII. The more a confessor avoids all secular and worldly intercourse with those he has to deal with, the more they will look to him with confidence concerning their spiritual affairs. It is a wise rule to go very little to your penitents' houses, unless they really wish it and press you to come; and even then you will do well to practise considerable caution, both because many very pious people do not like to meet him who knows all the secrets of their soul, out of the sacred tribunal; and because in such visits you may betray imperfections which will lessen the respect in which your penitents hold you. When any of them are ill, do not go without being sure that the sick man himself, and not merely his family, wants you. It is quite possible at such a time that even those whom you believe to have the fullest confidence in you, may prefer the assistance of some other priest; and in such a case it is your duty to give the sick person absolute freedom. If however, he asks for you, do all that is in your power for him. If you find or imagine that your penitents who are in health occasionally go to other confessors, avoid asking them about it; still more avoid shewing any displeasure at their so doing; you would lose their confidence by it. Interference in this matter would be an injury to a most important and sensitive right, that of seeking their own spiritual consolation; and would probably lead to the penitent's leaving you altogether, or at least to a doubt on your part as to his entire sincerity with you. But if you sanction such freedom, you may be sure that when your penitents seek you, they do so voluntarily. Nevertheless, your own fatherly treatment, your prudence and discretion, may pre-

vent any inducement on the part of your penitents to seek other Confessors. If poor penitents ask you for temporal aid, tell them kindly that, if they seek you as a spiritual father, you will do all in your power for them, but that they must apply to others for temporal assistance; otherwise there is always a danger that the poor should come to you, less from a sincere desire for spiritual aid, than to obtain material relief, and that thus they may frequent the Sacraments from unworthy motives, feigning piety and distress in order to excite your compassion. If you are convinced that there is no such danger, and feel it desirable to assist them, it is still better to do so through some third person, so as to keep the Confession clear from any human motives. You may and ought to press the duty and privilege of almsgiving on your rich penitents, but never ask them for anything whatsoever, otherwise between reluctance to refuse you and unwillingness to give, they may very likely leave you altogether, and the fear of similar requests will make them defer seeking another director, so that the poor will not benefit, while the rich man runs a risk of losing his soul. In the same way you should be very careful how you mix yourself up with your penitent's temporal affairs, except at their special request. Even then, you should use the greatest reserve. These precautions will ensure an easy and free approach to the Sacraments, and will enable penitents to come to them without regard to any consideration save their soul's salvation.

XXXIX. The sum of all is, that in order to the wise treatment of your patient you must acquaint yourself with the origin and cause of his spiritual

Thorough understanding of the penitent's condition.

ailments. Some confessors content themselves with ascertaining the kind and number of a penitent's sins. If he is properly disposed, they absolve him; if not, they simply dismiss him, refusing absolution, without giving any further assistance or advice. But a good Confessor will seek into the first movements of passion, and weigh the evil; learning from the penitent the habits and occasions which have led him to sin, so as better to apply a judicious correction to his faults, make him fit for absolution, and assist him to amend.

Reproof
should be
given
kindly, but
without
human
respect.

XL. When thoroughly acquainted with the cause and magnitude of the evil to be dealt with, you must proceed to its due correction. And here, do not forget that, though as a Father you must listen kindly to your penitents, still as a physician you must warn and rebuke them according to their need; especially such as rarely come to confession, and who are heavily burdened with mortal sin. This duty is incumbent, whatever may be the rank and position of the penitents, princes, magistrates, priests, or prelates, where they have been guilty of serious faults, or are wanting in true contrition. Pope Benedict XIV. says that the advice of a confessor is more efficacious than sermons. It is surely so, for the preacher does not know all the special circumstances which enable the Confessor to adapt his rebukes and remedies to the precise point requiring correction. A Confessor should not give heed to the other penitents who may be waiting for him, because, as S. Francis Xavier says, it is

• S. Luguori. No. 6-16.

far better to hear a few thorough confessions, than a great many imperfectly made. I must also strongly condemn the conduct of some Confessors, who if they find their penitent wanting in good dispositions, dismiss him at once, in order to save their own trouble. It is a received maxim among theologians, that however wanting in fit dispositions the penitent may be, it is the bounden duty of all Confessors to do everything in their power to render him fit for receiving absolution; setting before him, for instance, the insult he is offering to God, his danger of damnation, &c. It matters little if others are waiting, or even if they go away; the Confessor has to give account to God for the penitent actually kneeling before him, lest he lose him, and for none other.

XLI. The confessor is bound to enlighten those who may be in fatal ignorance as to any of their duties, whether habitual or positive. If it be ignorance concerning things necessary to salvation, he must always remove it wholly: if it concerns other matters, even of divine precept, and the Confessor really believes that his penitent will be hindered by being enlightened, he must pass on to other things without opening his eyes. Such is the opinion even of the strictest theologians; and that because the danger of formal sin is greater than that of material sin. God only punishes formal sin, which alone really displeases Him.

XLII. The following exceptions must however be made: 1. If injury to the general welfare arise from such ignorance; in which case the Confessor being bound to consider the interests of the Christian community, he ought to prefer the good of many

Enlightening the ignorant.

Exceptions to this rule.

to that of an individual, even if he knows that his warnings will be useless. Thus it is a duty to warn princes, governors, confessors and prelates, who are unfaithful to their duties; because their ignorance, even though invincible, is always hurtful to the Community, as a scandal, if nothing more. Pope Benedict XIV. applies the same rule to those who frequent the Sacraments, and who may cause scandal. 2. Where the penitent himself inquires, in which case the Confessor is bound to tell him the truth: for in such case the ignorance is not an absolutely invincible ignorance, which alone will justify the Confessor's silence. 3. Where the warning will benefit the penitent ultimately, although not at the actual moment.

Preparation
for
absolu-
tion.

XLIII. After such remonstrance and warning as may be needful, the confessor must lead his penitent to make a good act of contrition and firm resolution. Remember that very few penitents, especially among ignorant people, are careful about making an act of contrition before confession. Some confessors are satisfied with some such question as, "Do you heartily ask God's forgiveness for all this, and repent sincerely?" which is not a real act of contrition; after which, they give absolution. But a good confessor should spare no pains to excite a true repentance and hearty abhorrence of evil in penitents who have been guilty of mortal sin. Beginning with an act of attrition he will say, "My son, where is your due portion at present? In hell, despairing, forsaken of all the world, and of God Himself. You repent that you have offended God because you have deserved hell?" Here observe

that this attrition, whereby we repent of sin because we deserve hell, is not sufficient, but we must repent because we have offended God and have deserved hell. Then proceed to the act of contrition. "My son, what have you done? you have displeased an infinitely good God, you have treated Him without reverence, refused to obey Him, despised His Grace; but now repent with all your heart, abhor above all things disobedience to Him," &c. Here I would remind you, 1. that if your penitent confesses any sin after absolution, even supposing it to be immediately after, he must make a fresh act of contrition before fresh absolution, this being a new act of judgment: for many theologians hold it as probable that a confession, in order to be Sacramental, must be *informed* by contrition. Thus if a penitent has confessed, before making his act of contrition, it will not suffice to make that confession Sacramental, that his act of contrition be made afterwards; but having made this, he should repeat the confession, or at the least you should ask him, "Do you accuse yourself anew of all the sins you have just told me?"

XLIV. There are general remedies for all sins, General remedies. and there are special remedies suited to each individual vice. The former are, 1. Love of God, the only end for which He has created us. Here dwell on the happiness of living in friendship with God, and the anticipated hell of those who are at enmity with Him; as also on the temporal punishment which follows upon sin. 2. Ejaculatory prayer, frequent commendation of oneself to God's care. 3. Regular reception of the Sacraments, and perseverance in immediate confession, on the occurrence of any

serious fault. 4. Meditation on the Eternal Verities; above all on death. In the case of heads of families, regular family prayers. 5. God's Presence at the moment of temptation, with the words, "God seeth me." 6. Self-examination every evening, with an act of contrition, and of good resolution. 7. For laity, association with some confraternity, and for priests mental prayer, and thanksgiving after celebration or at the least some spiritual reading before and after the Holy Sacrifice.

Particular
remedies.

XLV. Particular remedies must be applied to individuals, according to their vices. For instance, you may advise one who entertains a feeling of hatred towards another, daily to commend that person to God. Or if he feels excited at the remembrance of wrongs done to him, let him dwell upon the wrongs he has himself done to God. To one who has fallen into sins of impurity, you will counsel a careful avoidance of idleness, of bad associates, and of all occasions of sin: one who has long indulged such evil habits should indeed shun what, though in themselves trifling, may be to him dangers by reason of his own weakness. Such an one should use some special prayer, at least night and morning, meditating upon the exceeding Purity of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His Blessed Mother. He should frequently receive the Holy Eucharist, so fitly called "*vinum germinans virgines*." To one who has a habit of blasphemy, recommend that he make the sign of the Cross several times on the ground with his tongue¹; daily to say some prayer as an act of reparation; and each morning to renew his resolution against anger, repeating three

¹ This is not a penance, I understand, given in England. Ed.

times, "Holy Jesus, give me patience." This custom will be most useful, and the words will instinctively recur to him when he is irritated. You may also advise him to say, "Cursed be my sin, and the devil who tempts me." &c. These and similar remedies, the Confessor must suggest according to the peculiar circumstances of those he is dealing with.

XLVI.^j When the Confessor finds that there is no reason why absolution should be refused, he must teach the penitent to end his confession by including all the faults just confessed, as well as all such in thought, word or deed, of commission or omission, which he does not remember. After which the Confessor will point out the serious nature of these sins, (especially if the penitent confesses but rarely), and going on to those which recur most frequently, he will suggest such remedies as seem best calculated to meet them. Where it is necessary, he will enjoin due restitution, whether of property, or reputation; and having imposed a suitable penance, he will give absolution. If the penitent has incurred any censure, which the Confessor has power to absolve, he will do so before giving general absolution.

XLVII.^k Study carefully the spiritual diseases and wounds of your penitent, in order to their treatment. Thus if you see him overwhelmed with shame and confusion, give him confidence by the assurance that you too are a man, not an angel; that there is nothing strange to you in men being sinful; that confession and repentance have more power to raise

The Physician's skill where his penitent is hindered by shame.

^j S. Charles pp. 54, 55.

^k S. F. de Sales p. 622, 623. S.P. de Neri, Vie, l. II. c. 21.

a man than sin has to cast him down, that neither God nor confessors measure a man by his past life, but by what he is at present; and that sins told in confession are so to say buried before God and one's confessor, never to be remembered again.

Where
shame and
the fear of
God are
wanting.

XLVIII. If your penitent is hardened and without shame, make him feel that he is kneeling before God; that his eternal Salvation is at stake; that at his last hour he will have to give a strict account of all unworthy confessions; and that in absolution the price and merit of the Death and Passion of our Lord are the means employed.

Where
courage
and confi-
dence are
wanting.

XLIX. If your penitent is timid, downcast, doubtful as to the forgiveness of his sins, encourage him by dwelling on the delight God takes in the repentance of the greatest sinners; tell him that the greater our misery, the more glorified is His Mercy; remind him that our Lord prayed for those who crucified Him, thereby teaching us that though we had crucified Him with our own hands, He would freely pardon us; that God so loves to see us repent that on the least true repentance He freely forgives all sin, so that could the lost and the fallen angels repent, everything would be forgiven them; the greatest Saints, such as S. Peter, S. Matthew, S. Mary Magdalene, David, &c. had been great sinners; and finally that the greatest injury we can offer to the Goodness of God, is not to believe confidently that He will forgive us; and that in the Creed we assert our belief in the remission of sins; which makes the certainty that we are forgiven in that ordinance which our Lord specially appointed for that end, an article of faith.

Where the
penitent is
anxious or
confused.

L. If your penitent is perplexed how to tell his sins,

or how to examine his conscience, promise to help him, and assure him that, with God's blessing, he shall make a good and holy Confession. Be charitable and discreet with every one, but especially with women, in helping them to confess shameful sins. If they voluntarily accuse themselves, do not be fastidious, or shew any signs of surprise, even should their language be coarse, until the confession is ended, when you can kindly and gently teach them a more becoming way of expressing themselves. If they confuse their confession with all manner of excuses, pretexts, and stories, be patient, and do not interfere till all is said, when you must question them so as to bring out a simple straight-forward avowal of their faults, shewing them that they erred in mixing up all these superfluous matters and excuses with their self-accusation, but not paining or irritating them.

LI. If you find that your penitent has great difficulty in mentioning these, lead him on by degrees to confess lesser faults ; such as thoughts of levity, or pleasure in hearing light conversation ; going on through evil thoughts and actions, and encouraging him by saying, "You will be very happy when you have made a good confession. God is shewing you great grace. His Holy Spirit is moving you to it : be brave, tell all your griefs ; you will feel so thankful when all is confessed, that you would not have left it undone for all the world ; and at your death it will be a great comfort to you to have made this humble confession. May God bless and assist you." Thus you will gently draw forth a full and profitable confession. When you have to deal with persons who are struggling in conscience with extraordinary and abomi-

When the penitent does not confess shameful sins.

nable sins, you must do everything to help and comfort them, setting God's abundant mercy before them, reminding them that His power to save is infinitely greater than that of a whole world of sin to destroy a soul, and promising besides every assistance and support in your power.

General
advice.

LII. It is well to advise everybody to confess and communicate frequently, choosing a good Confessor; to hear sermons and instructions, to procure and study good devotional books; to shun bad company, and seek good associates; to pray constantly; to make daily self-examination, and to meditate on Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell; to gaze and ponder over the image of the Crucified One reverently. Such was the advice given by S. Philip Neri; who was indefatigable in his efforts to confirm his penitents in perseverance. He continually quoted the inspired words, "He that persevereth unto the end shall be saved." He was wont to say that the best way to persevere, was to be very cautious, not attempting to do everything at once, or to become a saint in a few days. Thus it is not well to undertake a great many devotional exercises, because you are liable to weary of them, and give them up, or else to go through them carelessly. Rather undertake little, and never omit that; if the devil once persuades you to neglect one of your devotions, he will soon tempt you to neglect another, and so on, till all your good resolutions are melted away. "Therefore I would urge perpetually on you; 'Nulla dies sine lineâ.' Be on your guard against little faults: if you relax in this respect, and neglect them, your conscience will become hardened by degrees, and all will be lost.

Frequently renew your good resolutions, and never give them up, whatever temptations you may encounter." S. Philip Neri used further to say that though at first people generally possess great fervour, later on "the Lord makes as though he would go further," and then it is that we must be firm and untroubled, inasmuch as God withdraws His Sweetnesses only in order to prove our courage; and if we are brave and triumph over these temptations and discouragements, He restores His favour and consolations to us. The Saint used to say that for young men to be kept in the ways of perseverance, a diligent frequenting the Sacraments is as necessary as shunning evil companions and associating with the good. He was perpetually urging the need for prayer, and he established the custom in the Oratory of saying certain ones every evening for the grace of perseverance. He esteemed mortification of the will much more highly than mortification of the flesh, and he used to say that those Confessors were to blame, who having opportunity to exercise their penitents in obedience, neglected to do so, either from indolence, or human respect, "The mortification of the smallest passion," he was wont to say, "is worth more than many fasts and disciplines."

ARTICLE III.

SCIENCE OF THE THEOLOGIAN.

Its necessity and scope.

LIII^a. Your work in the tribunal of penance must be directed by the Science of theology, without which you cannot form a right judgment; consequently it is indispensable that you should study moral theology. Although you should never think yourself sufficiently versed in these subjects, but be always keeping up or increasing your knowledge; still for fear any self-mistrust should hinder you from exercising rightly your holy office as a Confessor, I would remind you that according to several authorities, it is, strictly speaking, sufficient if you know, 1. What is mortal sin, as distinct from venial, so as not to confound serious sin with that which comparatively is light. 2. The most notable circumstances of sin, at all events such as affect its character. 3. What removes the obligation of restitution, whether of the property or reputation of another. 4. The proximate occasions of sin and the chief remedies. 5. What are the necessary dispositions for a penitent. 6. Penances and remedies, at all events those in most ordinary use. 7. Finally 'a sufficient knowledge of ordinary casuistry, so that when an unusual case is brought before you, you should not hesitate as to whether or not it requires special in-

• Prêtre Sanctifié. n. 42-62.

vestigation ; as for instance, whether such or such a sin is a hindrance to marriage. You ought at least to know enough to make you conscious that you are liable to mistake, and so be led to study and inquire, before committing yourself to a decision.

LIV. This above all is necessary, otherwise your science will be useless to your penitents, and you will assuredly be betrayed either into laxity or rigorism. We will consider first the absolute necessity for such discretion, and then the more ordinary cases in which it is required, and the best way of exercising it. S. Bonaventure's words concerning conscience are singularly applicable to the Confessor : "*Cavenda est conscientia nimis larga, et nimis stricta. Nam prima generat præsumptionem, secunda desperationem : prima sæpe salvat damnandum, secunda damnat salvandum*"^b. It is ever so with the over-easy and the over-strict Confessor ; after their respective fashion, both deprive souls of much good and expose them to great dangers. The one fosters presumption in his penitents, not inspiring them with sufficient abhorrence of their faults, and not kindling in them sufficient eagerness to fulfil all their duties, thus weakening the principle of Christian fear in their souls. The rigorist, on the other hand, weakens the principle of Christian hope, and so drives souls to despair. Thus an easy conscience and a lax Confessor "*sæpe salvat damnandum*," while on the contrary, a too strict conscience and a rigid Confessor "*damnata salvandum*." If we consider the natural results of those two grievous evils, presumption and despair, we shall see

Science,
guided by
discretion.

^b Comp. Theol. t. I. l. 2. c. 52.

this truth at once. Presumption does not check the action of either will or heart; nor does it omit the practice of certain valuable means of grace, amongst others that of confession; so that the presumptuous soul, thus upheld, grows worse but slowly, and the hope always remains that, coming to a deeper knowledge and better use of these means, it will be healed, and saved. Despair on the contrary, generally destroys all energy and desire to do what is right, through the distress and sadness which it creates; and the soul which is overpowered by it, considering everything useless, ceases to value or practise all religious exercises, especially confession. Thus letting go all safeguards, and believing itself lost, such a soul knows no restraint, and goes rapidly from bad to worse, having no hope of remedy or cure.

LV. Take the case of a sinner who has for long been plunged in vice; he is "damnandus," that is, in the way to perdition. From time to time his conscience pricks him, to seek confession, his most availing remedy. But it is difficult for him to resolve to do this, partly because of the shame of revealing so many sins, partly because he fears to meet with severe reproof and penance. But supposing he hears it said, how good such and such a Confessor is, how kindly he receives people, how helpful, how comforting he is; such a description attracts the sinner; he feels as if he could go to such an one; and taking courage, ends by seeking him. If the Confessor, in spite of gentleness, puts forcibly before the penitent the danger of his condition, he may be brought to true compunction; and as nothing too difficult is laid upon him, he heartily resolves to do as he is told. He

receives absolution, and departs greatly comforted, fulfils his appointed penances, changes his ways, and is saved. Here we have the "*Sæpe salvat damnandum.*" Take the opposite case of a penitent obeying God's commandments, who is "*salvandus,*" i. e. in the right way to Heaven. But his Confessor who was wise, dies, and he finds himself in the hands of an over-strict Confessor, who, instead of treating him as the other did, will spend two hours examining into his faith; requires him to be versed in the theology of fasting, and, regardless of health, will only allow three ounces of food at night; or two or three hours recreation on holy days; examines strictly into the fulfilment of his duties in all capacities, refuses to allow things which former excellent Confessors had allowed; and finally puts endless scruples about mortal sin into his head, and requires him to make a general confession. The unfortunate penitent does not know how either to do or to leave undone all that is required of him; he goes home troubled and disheartened, with no energy for doing anything; he neglects his wonted religious duties for fear that more will be laid upon him; next he tries to forget his perplexities in society, a temptation occurs, and he falls into mortal sin; not having courage to confess it, he goes on again, falls anew, and ends by being lost. Here is the "*damnat salvandum.*"

LVI. Beware then of an over-lax or a too rigid line, lest you cause either presumption or despair, and so fail to be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. An agent may damage his master by being too easy with the workmen under him, slurring over their faults and paying them exorbitant wages, and thus

wasting his goods by bad service. On the other hand he may cause his master not only to be ill served, but to be entirely deserted, by an over-strict treatment of the workmen, exacting excessive labour and diminishing their wages. And you may do the like in serving your Master's interests. Through laxity you may win persons to seek Him, but not to treat Him with fitting reverence: through severity you make men fear and fly from Him. Strive then to be discreet and just, so as to preserve your penitents from the carelessness and snares of presumption, as well as from the terrors and dangers of despair. Win alike reverence and love, fear and confidence for God: lay the yoke of the law upon your penitents, but take care that it be neither so light that they cannot feel it, nor so heavy that it crushes them. Let it be really a yoke, but one full of sweetness. Let your penitent feel the weight of his duties, without being oppressed by them; make him carry his burthen, but see that it is a light one: in this way you will truly help souls and serve our Lord, by causing His yoke to be light, as He Himself said, "*Jugum Meum suave est, et onus Meum leve.*" And this can only be done by exercising great discretion and judgment. This discretion must be applied,—1. In your interrogations. 2. In defining judicially what is allowed and what forbidden, what serious and what light; what is precept and what counsel. 3. In examining the dispositions of the guilty soul, so as to judge when to bind and when to loose.

Discretion
in teach-
ing and
deciding.

LVII. In order to the attainment of a sound practical moral science, 1. Say frequently to our Lord,

“*c* Da mihi sedium Tuarum assistricem sapientiam,... ut mecum sit et mecum laboret, ut sciam quid acceptum sit apud Te.” 2. Keep your heart clear of all party spirit, of that spirit which leads us to fail to allow the due weight of opposing reasons, and to this end makes us despise them, and strive to overthrow them. Let your desire to promote God’s glory and the good of souls be simple-hearted without any thought of your own honour or reputation; and always be ready to accept the opinions of others, if an impartial consideration convinces you that they are right. 3. Do not be satisfied with studying one author, make it a duty to read different authors. If you only study one, especially if he be one of those who passes over opposite views and the reasons on which they are founded, caring chiefly to establish his own opinion, you will probably end by accepting his view as infallible and universal; merely because you are not duly acquired with the arguments of the other side. But if you study various authors, their opinions and motives, you will appreciate the great extent of varying opinion on points of morality among the doctors of theology, and far from expecting every one to agree with you, your eyes will be opened as to your own mistakes; and you will see wherein they lie, and how to counteract your special tendencies, whether to excessive laxity or severity. The wisest and most learned men are generally the most cautious in their decisions, and the least ready to condemn others, because they see further into what has to be said on both sides; while usually great readiness to decide, and to

• Wisdom ix. 4.

despise those who come to a different decision, is a token not of profound learning, but of deficient knowledge and light.

Precautions to be taken when there is danger of formal sin.

LVIII. In the study of various authors, you will necessarily encounter disputed opinions. And here I would call upon you always to remember the maxim of our greatest teachers of morality and asceticism, that, where there is danger of formal sin, you should lean towards severity, for the greater good of your penitent. By severity, you will the better preserve him from the greatest of all dangers; that of offending God, and deserving hell, whither he might go, as others have done while in the very act of sin. If then you doubt as to whether the occasion of sin be really imminent or not, be on the safe side, and make your penitent avoid it at once; as for instance, in the case of desires or actions which he knows are forbidden; else he may be overpowered by the seductive charms of sin, and consent to it, thus deposing both God and His law. In this and similar cases, you are consulting your penitent's real good by removing him from so great dangers, by refusing absolution, unless he will abandon the occasion of sin. Yet even here, you must beware of an excessive rigour. But if the penitent is only in danger of committing a material sin, you will employ prudence and discretion rather than severity; at the same time you must not adopt one exclusive line of conduct, rather suiting your mode of treatment to the spiritual condition and wants of your penitent.

Line to be taken in controverted questions of casuistry.

LIX. When the question is of things permitted by some theologians, and forbidden by others, do you beware of following one line so exclusively, as alto-

gether to condemn the opposite cause. In many such controversies the Church admits diversity of opinion; do not you be more dogmatic than she is, or add to the difficulties of those who already find it hard to comply with the obligations which God and His Church clearly lay upon them.

LX. I will illustrate my meaning by a case taken from among a thousand. A Confessor had taught one of his penitents to confess her sins with entire sincerity, and told her that if she fell again into a particular sin she was bound to confess, not merely such circumstances as altered the nature of the sin, but also any aggravating circumstances. After a certain time had elapsed this person returned to him, and he found that during the interval she had frequented the Sacraments, and having relapsed into that special sin, she had courage to confess its nature, but had not courage to confess the aggravating circumstances; so that she had been guilty of a succession of double sacrileges in her confessions and Communions. The Confessor reproached himself grievously for having laid this obligation upon her, without which she would have been receiving the Sacraments profitably, and perhaps might have corrected her besetting sin, at least to a great extent; whereas, as it was, she had added to her other sins by sacrilegious confessions and communions. More caution on his part, he felt, would have saved his penitent from sin, and God would not have been so often offended; nor could he find consolation in the thought that she should have been more obedient, and have fulfilled all he had laid upon her. He felt that charity and prudence required him to have been more discreet.

Illustration.

LXI. He began anew to study with a view to find how far he had been justified in imposing the obligation, and in the course of this study he found that S. Thomas, according to the interpretation of Melchior Cano, denies the reality of such an obligation; that the Council of Trent says nothing about it, and further that Benedict XIII, in an Italian instruction added to the Roman Council which he held A.D. 1725, having said that the obligation to confess such circumstances as change the nature of sin, is unquestionable, goes on to say, "But as to the circumstances which notably increase sin without changing its character, there are two opinions among doctors: some holding that it is obligatory to specify these in confession; some denying it; anyhow you may hold to the maxim that the penitent is bound to answer truly such questions as the Confessor may put to him with a view to ascertaining the condition of his soul." These words cast a new light upon his mind, and he exclaimed. "I have always heard that the most learned men are the most circumspect and most cautious in deciding or imposing obligations, and now I have a proof of it. My ignorance has been the ruin of this soul. High authority did not decide between those two opinions, but I did! Who required me to do so, or gave me such a right? The authority takes a middle course, as though he had said, "I do not bind you to confess all aggravating circumstances, so that, whether questioned or not, you sin by withholding them; but neither do I allow any dissimulation when you are questioned; inasmuch as it may be necessary for your confessor to be acquainted with these circumstances in order to know the real state

‘of your soul.’ These reflections,” he continues, “taught me how carefully I ought henceforth to act. Greater knowledge would have led to greater discretion.”

LXII. In short, let your maxim be to seek the glory of God and the good of souls by whatever means will most efficaciously prevent their sin and His injury, without encroaching on lawful rights. And this line of conduct will not be found either in a lax or a severe morality. The one flatters human sensitiveness, but does not cause the law to be sufficiently felt or respected; the other, by imposing an over-heavy yoke, leads human weakness to break away from law and legislation. That only can be a wholesome morality which avoids both perils, neither imposing nor removing obligations without good cause. Such conduct requires study and thought, and is not likely to win the praise of men, but it assuredly is that most calculated to promote the glory of God and the good of souls.

LXIII. To come to a practical point, it would be unduly lax to dispense a penitent from a duty which is positive, and which he knows every Christian ought to act up to, and, as father judge and physician, you cannot betray the truth or dispense your penitent from the necessary remedies. To do so would be intolerable laxity. Even if you foresee that the penitent will dispense himself, you must be firm to the truth, and then his shortcomings will be wholly his own, without any complicity on your part. As a father and a physician, try to induce him to act up to his duties, but do not dispense him from them.

Conclusion.

Practical use of discretion in teaching and deciding.

LXIV. If however the obligation is held to be doubtful by learned authorities, you had better try it yourself, and your own experience may alter your opinion with regard to others. You can suggest such obligations to those persons whose piety renders them likely to fulfil them, but do not impose them unconditionally. With others to whom such obligations would be new, you must use all your charity as a father of souls and spiritual physician, to weigh duly the advantages or disadvantages of your conduct; and be guided by three maxims; either 1. say nothing at all: or 2. take a medium course between the opposed opinions; or 3. if you cannot take such a course, decide nothing positively; set that which is purest and most perfect before those under your direction, but as counsel, not as obligation.

Of uncertain obligations.

LXV. If your penitent is *bonâ fide* ignorant as to some such obligation, and you cannot hope to do any good by speaking, then be silent. Trustworthy authors, following S. Augustine, (who says, “*Ubi scirem tibi non prodesse, te non monerem, te non terrerem,*”) decide that where the Confessor sees that his penitent *is* ignorant of an obligation, and would not fulfil it, were it set before him, it is often allowable and even advisable to leave the matter alone; still more, of course, if the obligation is doubtful. Do not say that it is the penitent’s fault, if having been warned, he fails to fulfil his duty. Doubtless he must give account for his weakness; but you too will have to give account for the imprudence with which you have sought to subject the weak virtue of your penitent to difficult or doubtful obligations which perhaps God does not require of him. You

would be like a physician who persists in administering to a weak patient some powerful remedy only suited to a strong digestion and hearty constitution, insisting the while, that since the remedy is good in itself, the patient's weakness and incapacity to digest it matter not. If the sick man died, we should blame the physician; and the father who lost his son thus would certainly not think that the physician had done his duty by the patient.

LXVI. When it is a necessity for you to decide Via media. between laxity and rigorism, you are indeed happy if, thanks to study and discretion, you can steer between the two opposite opinions, according to the rule given by Benedict XIV. in his celebrated work, "*De Synodo Diœcesanâ.*" He exhorts bishops to do their utmost, when cases of conscience are under discussion, to promote a medium line between over-indulgence and over-severity. "*Nobiscautiusconsilium videretur, ut episcopus controversias hujusmodi in collationibus, seu conferentiis de casibus moralibus, quæ inter ipsius clericos haberi solent, discutiendas relinqueret, nec quidquam circa illas in synodo sine prævio apostolicæ sedis oraculo decernendum susciperet; hoc tamen studiose curando, ut in prædictis collationibus moralibuseorum theologorum sententia vinceret, qui media via inter rigorem et laxitatem incedere norunt.*" Further there is a condemned proposition as to the necessity of explaining the habitual circumstances of sin. Thus to avoid the rigorist's error, you may say to your penitent, "I do not enjoin it upon you, so that if you accidentally go to a strange Confessor, you are obliged to call his attention to the fact that you have before been guilty of,

and have confessed the same sin, and that if you fail to do so, you are guilty of sacrilege. But I must make an exception in any case where you ought to accuse yourself of a blameable negligence as to correcting some bad habit. In that case, I do not dispense you from answering such questions as may be put to you, on the contrary I maintain that you are bound to answer, and confess that the sin is habitual."

Applica-
tion of this
rule to oc-
casions of
sin.

LXVII. Supposing it to be a question of certain occupations, of actions which are *dangerous in themselves, but not actual sins*; do not through indulgence permit them without precautions; but on the other hand do not sternly and totally forbid them, because you will gain nothing by such a prohibition. A discreet Confessor will put hindrances in the way of such occupations, and only permit them when accompanied with such precautions as may avert their danger. Thus in the question of occasions of sin, supposing a person to have been twenty times in the society of a woman, and to have been led into sin nine times, it would be blameably lax of you not to observe that this is a proximate occasion, and not to insist upon a cessation of intercourse, because they had met more often without sinning than guiltily. But if in similar circumstances these persons had resisted sin, and had only failed two or three times by interior acts, it would be over-severe to insist on putting an end to such an occasion of sin. Of course I should except a case where you had special reason to take a different course, or to believe that your penitent would not abstain from sin if he continued to meet that person. A wise Confessor would insist in the first instance on the occasion of

sin being at once avoided; in the second he would begin by putting difficulties in the way, by exhorting his penitent, and warning him of his danger. But if it is difficult for him to leave the person who is the cause of temptation altogether, you may insist on certain precautions, such as that he should not remain alone with that person, and that if he falls into sin he should at once come and confess it. A rigorist Confessor will allow no hindrance in the avoiding an immediate occasion of sin, save physical impossibility; the lax Confessor accepts excuses which cannot even plead a moral impossibility. Do you, as a discreet Confessor, accept such excuses as amount practically to moral impossibility, even though they do not amount to physical impossibility; but point out the means whereby the occasion may be removed.

LXVIII. and LXIX. If you cannot adopt a middle course, if it is impossible for you to be silent, and you are constrained to answer a penitent who presses you upon obscure and controverted questions, I doubt not that your piety and respect for the law will incline you to severity. But in order that your veneration for the law may be tempered with pity for the infirmity of sinners, listen to S. Ambrose, who in his Commentary on the 118th Psalm, says: "*Ipse timor Domini, nisi sit secundum scientiam, nihil prodest, immo obest plurimum.*" Having illustrated this by the example of the Jews, he goes on to set forth with what science he would combine the fear of the Lord. "*Et quid de Judæis dico? Sunt etiam in nobis, qui habent timorem Dei, sed non secundum scientiam, statuentes duriora præcepta, quæ non possit*

Fear modified by knowledge.

humana conditio sustinere. Timor in eo est, quia videntur sibi consulere disciplinæ, opus virtutis exigere; sed inscitia in eo est, quia non compatiuntur naturæ, non æstimant possibilitatem. Non sit ergo irrationabilis timor. Etenim vera sapientia a timore Deo incipit, nec est sapientia spiritualis sine timore Dei: ita timor sine sapientiâ esse non debet."

In order then that your fear may unite knowledge and spiritual wisdom, do not speak upon controverted subjects as one holding a right to lay down the law.

Necessity
of discre-
tion in
public
speaking.

LXX. and LXXI. Here I would for a moment pause, and apply the same rules to preaching. For if discretion is so necessary with respect to individual penitents, it is equally so in public speaking: where the countless variety of character and circumstance among those who listen, adds not a little to the risk incurred of fostering an over-easy religion, or goading souls to despair through the opposite extreme. Therefore I would urge you not to discuss doubtful or controverted questions when preaching, but to confine yourself to those certain and indisputable truths which all have need to learn: well is it for you, and through you well for the Church, if you can succeed in teaching the faithful to abhor and forsake undeniable sins, and to fulfil undeniable precepts and duties. If, as a parish priest, you invite any of your brethren to preach and confess in your parish, take care not to have either the over-easy, or over-strict; but seek rather such prudent, discreet men as will teach daily practical duties; charity, purity, humility, patience; and who will attack habitual vice; impurity (yet not so as to endanger the innocent), hatred, discord, injustice and the like.

LXXI. Great harm is done by indiscreet preaching. In the case of the over-lax moralist, 1. the hearers infer their right to do or to leave undone a great deal more than what was intended, they learn to resist the wise restrictions laid on them by their spiritual rulers; and cause great scandal among those who are better disposed. On the other hand the severe moralist, who thinks to secure the holiest line by taking the narrowest, endangers souls through their repugnance to do the things laid upon them, so that men leave duties undone which are made needlessly difficult; and then shrink from confession and resolutions of amendment. They go on neglecting the Sacrament, and gradually giving up their devotions, till at last they fall into all manner of sin, consider good works useless, and end by despair!

LXXII. Let those to whom you entrust any dealing with the souls committed to you be gifted with paternal charity, a physician's skill, and moral discretion. Charity leads a man to choose such subjects for his discourses as will bring forth fruit to the glory of God and the peace and salvation of souls, rather than such as will redound to his own fame or credit.

LXXIII. This rule is easily given and followed both in public and private teaching, so far as concerns many general principles, but it is hardly possible to give instructions for its application in special cases. All theologians agree that it is often needful to lay down abstract rules; i. e. that luxury is a sin, neglect of alms-giving is a sin, immodest dress is a sin; but no theologians can give rules by which you can say absolutely to a penitent that he

Who are
the best
preachers.

Keeping
to general
principles.

is guilty of serious sin because he does not give such a fixed portion of his income in alms ; because from time to time he is desultory about his religious duties ; because he spends so much on dress, furniture, or the table, or because he has so large an establishment. Where the general question is plain and certain, speak of it, but with reserve ; do not go overmuch into particulars, and do not say that such and such a thing is mortal sin, unless the Church has decided and pronounced it so to be. Be content with urging the general principle, and leave the rest. God's grace will speak to the heart of each individual and apply your teaching according to his need. It chanced once that a wise and discreet preacher was called to a town where certain vain and immoral fashions were prevalent, all the more, since several preachers, seeking to eradicate them, had pointedly censured the offences by name. The new comer resolved only to dwell on the eternal truths, and upon general modesty in dress &c, without specifying any particular breaches thereof. Before long the vanities he was railing against disappeared of their own accord. When the preacher was congratulated on his success, his answer was, "My predecessors had struck at the branches ; I at the root. It is of little avail to lop off the branches, while the root is fresh and strong ; they are sure to crop out anew ; destroy but the root, and the branches must perish."

Import-
ance of
the Theo-
logian's
part, and
the science
required
therein.

LXXIV*. "*Labia sacerdotis custodient scientiam, et legem requirent ex ore ejus*!" In order to avoid making shipwreck of his office as Theologian, and to steer safely between that scylla and charybdis of lax-

* S. Liguori. No. 17. 18.

† Mal. 2. 7.

ity and rigorism, the Confessor must know the law ; for how can he teach that to others which he knows not himself? Thus S. Gregory says to direct souls in the way of salvation, is the art of arts : “ *Artium ars est regimen animarum ;*” and S. Francis de Sales says that there is no office so important or so difficult as the Confessor’s. The most important, since final salvation is the aim and end of all wisdom ; the most difficult, for the Confessor’s work requires a knowledge of almost all subjects, and a great power of combining and adapting that knowledge².

² Several sections on Rigorism, Probabilism, and Relaxation are here omitted.

CHAPTER II.

Precautions before hearing Confessions.

HAVING spoken of the qualities requisite for a good Confessor, I would now turn to the precautions you should use, so that your ministry may be profitable both to you and to your penitents. Some of these apply to your previous conduct, some to the actual office therein fulfilled; all will help you to avoid the danger of abusing your sacred ministry, or of neglecting it.

Not to be
deficient
in the re-
quisite
qualities.

CXXIX*. Not to be deficient in the requisite qualifications, to esteem your ministry duly, not to forsake it for human reasons or mistaken spiritual causes, are all necessary conditions to the end.

1. Not to exercise this office without possessing the necessary qualifications. Your heart must be filled with a father's love, else you will neglect or give up this exhausting work of your ministry; a work which love only can make bearable to either Confessor or penitent, while love only can recompense the one, and gain remission of sins, grace not to fall again, and strength to persevere for the other: and for both, the blessing of promoting God's Glory. True; charity alone will not suffice, but without it all else is insufficient. It is the most difficult and the most necessary qualification, it is at once the best

* Prêtre Sanctifié No. 101-118.

means of obtaining the judge's wisdom and the physician's skill, and of using them when obtained. Moreover it is the most often needed: out of a hundred confessions scarcely two or three will require any unusual science, but all will require great love in receiving, bearing with, and helping the penitent. Therefore above all aim at possessing a paternal charity.

CXXX. Join to this love, the physician's skill. ^{Physician's skill.} It may be truly affirmed that all moral science must be directed by this skill, which at once strengthens and maintains it, and is its perfection and complement. This skill is in fact neither more or less than that ascetical science which, rightly discerning between speculative and practical theology, teaches us how to apply our moral science most to the glory of God and the good of souls in our sacred ministry; how to avoid the extremes of laxity and harshness; how to be both prudent and discreet. Through this skill you understand, not merely the subject-matter of your interrogations, but also how to discover and know thoroughly the disease you have to treat, so that with care, discernment, and necessary reserve you may carry out your treatment, without injury to the patient. Where it is a question of technical instruction and decision, this skill will enable you to avoid the twofold danger of severity and laxity, and by it you will know when to take a decided tone, when to keep prudent silence, when to apply strong remedies, and when merely common advice. But above all it will assist you in the office of judge, when, in the question of giving or refusing absolution, great skill is needed to fit your penitent

either to receive the Sacrament duly, or to submit to a refusal without risk to his soul. By this skill, and the knowledge and experience it gives, you will be better able to assist penitents in fulfilling their burdensome duties, and to make their repentance and penance truly profitable, both in reparation for the past, and in averting future falls. Mere moral science only aims at a right absolution of the sinner; ascetic science leads him on to perfection; therefore I intreat you study it in order to acquire the good physician's skill.

Study.

CXXXI. Nevertheless you must diligently study the moral science also, or you will incur the threat of the Prophet Hosea, "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to Me^b." As far as the ministry of reconciliation is concerned, to obtain this useful moral science so as to use it for the good of souls, you must cultivate an even, teachable spirit; you must be diligent in prayer, and in the study of those who have written on both sides of disputed questions. You will never be an useful Confessor without all these three qualifications, and it is hard to say which is most necessary, the father's love, the physician's skill, or the judge's science. When I see priests who are eager after the science of morals but indifferent to the ascetic study, or ignoring that spiritual life which alone can give them a true paternal charity, I cannot but ask myself, whether this great moral science will ever make them good Confessors? Will their profound technical knowledge, without any warmth of heart, enable them rightly to discharge

^b Hos. iv. 6.

the most difficult function of their sacred calling? Will it supply them with patience, charity and zeal to help their penitents? Surely the profoundest theological learning would be infinitely more valuable to our Priesthood, if united to a life of prayer and devotion, which alone can make men good spiritual fathers and physicians. By all means study diligently, but do not stop there; cultivate asceticism and earnestly seek an ever-growing charity.

CXXXII. I would set before you three main reasons why you should duly value and devote yourself to this function of your ministry. A high idea of this ministry.

CXXXIII. Nothing is more acceptable to our Lord than a great zeal for souls, through which you are enabled to give them very effectual help by the ministry of reconciliation. Remember how our Lord, after His Resurrection, asked three times of S. Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" and after the Apostle's earnest assurance, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," Jesus required as a proof of that love, that the sheep should be fed: "Feed My sheep, feed My lambs." Nor has He changed, since He ascended into Heaven. While on earth the Saviour's love and zeal for men was boundless, even till He died for them; and now in His glory, He still liveth to make Intercession for them. There, where He sitteth at the Father's Right Hand, it is still as our Redeemer and Intercessor; "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." In the Blessed Sacrifice He offers Himself continually for us, and feeds us with His own Body No function more acceptable to Christ.

in the Holy Communion. If then He were to appear to you visibly, asking, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" you would earnestly desire to be able to reply, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Bethink you then, that while in His Gospel He has taught us that all who are His disciples must keep His commandment, and love one another; "by this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one towards another;" He requires something further of you His Priests; not love in corporal works of mercy only, but spiritual love, bidding you "Feed My sheep, Feed My lambs." Would ye, to whom, on your ordination-day, He promised, "Behold I call you no more servants, I call you My friends," refuse Him this proof of your love? He will not merely give you the precious title of His friend; He will also give you all the privileges and favours attached to so glorious a position. But if you voluntarily neglect the exercise of this weighty ministry committed by Him to you, can you affect really to love and serve Him? No, of truth. Hear what S. Chrysostom says, commenting on those words of our Lord to S. Peter: "Nullum enim officium hoc Deo charius...neque prorsus alia res est, quæ perinde declaret doceatque, quis sit fidelis, et amans Christi, quam si fratrum curam agat, proque illorum salute gerat sollicitudinem." If ye do not love Jesus Christ according to His Own commandment, can ye be at peace with yourselves, or reasonably expect Him to look favorably upon you?

No function more useful to souls.

CXXXIV. Again; nothing is more profitable or more needful for your neighbour's good, than zeal; and foremost amid the fruits of zeal, your labours in

the sacred tribunal. Doubtless teaching and preaching are most necessary functions, but these are more easily supplied; one man can speak to thousands of hearers; a few discourses go a long way, to attentive hearers who will diligently and studiously follow up what has been already taught them. But it is otherwise with respect to confession; in this vineyard we need many labourers, and the labour is ceaseless. Each person must be confessed separately, and often one individual requires as much time as would be occupied by several Sermons. Moreover each person requires to be confessed repeatedly, whether the pious who need to keep up their fervour, or sinners who need conversion and reconciliation with God. Beware then how you neglect this duty under the excuse that there are other confessors; there can never be too many assisting the faithful freely to approach the fountain of salvation in the Sacraments. Have you not seen that many give up the habit of confession, because they did not readily find their confessor, or because he was so busy that they were obliged to wait for him? and so either from impatience, or occupation, they gave it up, God only knows at what loss to their souls! Possibly they may not return at the first opportunity, but even if they do, how likely it is that failing the grace of the Sacrament and the counsel of their confessor, they will, on the first temptation that meets them, fall into mortal sin, and so make their next confession far more difficult, nay even run the greater risk of being altogether lost. Nor is this all; a deficiency of confessors is injurious not only to the

penitents, but to the priests themselves, who, overburdened with work, are in danger of doing it hurriedly, or of giving it up for fear of physical exhaustion or spiritual hurt. You would hold yourself bound to minister to the bodily sickness or distress of your brethren; how can you turn away from the necessities of souls, whether arising from mortal sin, or from grievous temptations whereby they incur the danger not merely of temporal loss, but eternal? You should further be stimulated in your work of love by the consideration of the great benefits obtained by the faithful in confession. Those places where good and assiduous confessors are found will generally shew results of the work in the greater number of those who frequent the sacraments, a better tone of morals, and a more general religious influence. A holy Father once said, "give us good confessors, and the world will soon be reformed;" we may certainly say, "Deprive us of a sufficiency of good confessors, and the world will soon sink into disorder and corruption." Believe me, you will do a greater work for your neighbour by fulfilling this function of your office diligently, than by spending fortunes on the poor, or giving up your life to the sick; for through it you will convey to souls the riches of eternity, and the precious life of grace.

Nothing
more pro-
fitable to
the Con-
fessor
himself.

CXXXV. Nor can you do anything more profitable to yourself than the diligent exercise of your office as confessor, whether you look at the subject as regards God, your neighbour, or the ministry itself. As regards God; you are forwarding His own most precious work, the salvation of souls, and

that in a more direct and immediate way than by any prayers, sacrifices, or sermons of your own ; inasmuch as through absolution you do not merely lead men to the life of grace, but you actually impart it to those who are disposed to receive it. In this our Saviour gathers the fruit of His Agony and Death ; He triumphs over His enemies and drives them forth ; He enters into and fills the souls of His faithful servants ; He finds the sheep which were lost, rejoicing over them with a joy in which He bids all Heaven to share. And you, the minister and channel of this victory, this gathering-in, think you that He Who has promised so great a reward to the humblest work of corporal charity, will not much more reward you for your spiritual gifts to His children ?

CXXXVI. Again, how bright a jewel in your eternal crown will be the conversion of a soul ! Nature and grace alike kindle a great gratitude in the penitent's heart towards you his spiritual father, who has set him free from the burden of sin and remorse, who has saved his soul from peril of eternal damnation, and taught him to feel the peace of God's Holy Spirit in his heart. Through your ministry he has regained courage to work out his own salvation, to shun that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good ; and he hopes always to find in and from you guidance and light in all his doubts ; consolation in sorrow, sickness and death ; pity and succour, if he fall again ; in short all that his soul needs until he attain everlasting life. How can he fail to feel a lively and sincere gratitude towards you, which he will prove by constant prayer for you ? And his

Gratitude
of peni-
tents.

guardian Angel will foster this gratitude as a reward for all you have done for one he so dearly loves. Surely the prayers of those who are purified and enriched by the fruit of your labours, will be no small blessing to you both in life and death. Many a good Confessor has experienced a great gift of devotion, which does not arise within himself, but which comes direct from our Dear Lord, in reply to the petitions of penitents for their spiritual fathers; petitions gladly heard and accepted by that loving Lord and Master. In sickness and in death this sacred interchange of love will abound; if the Confessor is the first to be called from the world, he will not forget his spiritual children, and, if the souls he has won for God, are permitted to enter the unseen life before him, surely they will not cease abundantly to repay his kindly offices bestowed upon them here.

The Con-
fessor's
own Sanc-
tification.

CXXXVII. Yet again the very ministry itself is remarkably adapted to your sanctification, inasmuch as it requires constant mortification in setting aside occupations and pursuits more to your taste, in order to fulfil this office which is at once wearisome to the body and full of anxiety both as to your own soul and to those of your penitents. The demand upon you for patience and charity in receiving, assisting, bearing with those who come to you, is great. Moreover the truths you inculcate, the reproofs you administer, the encouragements you bestow, will all return, as it were, a blessing upon your own soul. These benefits will be yours not merely once a day, as in celebrating or preaching, but frequently, and all the more sanctifying to you as your neighbour's needs

are urgent and trying. Furthermore there is less fear of losing the value of your actions in God's sight through vain-glory; your sermons are delivered before a numerous and intelligent audience; but your work in the confessional is known to none save God, your penitent and yourself. Not unfrequently, so far from praise, you may be exposed to blame, which must be borne silently, lest you break the seal of Confession; and again you will be called upon to minister to the sick or troubled in conscience at unseasonable and inconvenient times, by day and by night. All these are so many fresh occasions for your sanctification.

CXXXVIII. Call to mind all your apostolic functions, and you will find none that ought to be more precious to you, whether for the glory of God, the good of your neighbour, or your own benefit in this world and the next. Who can say how great will be your gain hereafter through the numerous souls you have saved by a ministry less conspicuous than preaching, but far more constant and irksome, less exposed to the dangers of vain-glory, and capable of winning for you countless blessings? Seek then duly to prize this portion of your sacred office. The venerable Louis de Ponte was gifted by God with special capacity and love for this work. His devotion to the works of spiritual mercy, comforting the afflicted, teaching the ignorant, counselling the doubtful, converting sinners, upholding the just, and leading them on to perfection and usefulness to others, was so great that, when unable through a bodily infirmity to sit, he would remain kneeling in his confessional for five or six consecutive hours, rather

How truly
men have
valued
Confes-
sion.

than deprive himself and others of so great benefits. S. Philip Neri was always ready to receive any who sought him by day or by night, regardless of his own convenience. Father Pinamonti habitually heard confessions for eleven hours daily, nearly the whole year round, as patient with the last who came to him as the first. S. J. F. Régis received a number of peasants who had come to him, after he had sickened of his last illness. S. Francis de Sales was always so ready and so efficient in this ministry, that he never could halt anywhere when travelling without being delayed to hear confessions. J. de Nivelles being ordered three months treatment for his health, refused to leave the confessional for so long a time. Thus the Lord enlightened and encouraged his servants to serve Him in this ministry, and they in return shewed their hearty love by their indefatigable labours for the sanctification of their penitents and of their own souls.

Do not give
up this
ministry
from
earthly
motives.

CXXXIX. I would have you, then, so devoted to this ministry that no human motives, such as more congenial work, fatigue or weariness, should be able to distract you from it. Of course inevitable circumstances, or the necessities of health may at times hinder you; but as self-love is very deceptive, I would urge you to strive after a hearty confidence in God, and ask yourself how you can better win His Grace, even for your temporal needs, than by giving up part of your time, and your physical and mental energies to a ministry which so greatly promotes His Honour and glory? Those who wait upon an earthly monarch are not slow to sacrifice in such service their personal interests, relying on an abundant recompence;

and shall God's Priests and servants doubt that if they labour solely for His Glory, He will supply all their needs? Or if indeed your health or your temporal affairs were to suffer from your devotion, could they suffer for a better, a nobler or more advantageous cause?

CXL. But again, are you inclined to neglect this useful work by reason of spiritual hindrances, such as the fear of betraying your own conscience, or that of others; the dread that you are deficient in necessary qualities, and that you have made great mistakes; or the excuse that your ministry exposes you to temptations, or hinders you from due watchfulness over yourself? First of all, I would warn you that your self-love finds it desirable to exaggerate these spiritual hindrances; first hiding or colouring the indolence which shuns trouble and weariness, and then, equally without your perception, concealing an inclination to more attractive and congenial occupations. The devil will take advantage of this self-love, and transforming himself into an Angel of light, he will force increasingly upon you the pretended perils of that, which in reality is the best means for advancing the sanctification of confessor and penitent. By this means he is able to deprive the penitent of your help, and you of the gain of helping him. And thus he accomplishes double work; seizing those persons who go on in the ways of sin, for lack of confessors, and leading you to neglect your sacred ministry, and fall into sloth and carelessness, secularising you altogether. The evil may spread, so that you yourself fail in your own confession, and then Satan has you safely in his net, and triumphs in his

Or from
false spiri-
tual mo-
tives.

successful warfare against the Church, by depreciation of her Sacraments. Without denying the Sacrament as do heretics, or despising it as do the ungodly, you become a prey to the delusion which tempts men, under a pretext of piety, to forsake that Sacrament which is so essential to holiness and to salvation. You may well doubt whether your misgivings be not a temptation of nature and of the father of lies, rather than the Voice of God and of the Truth. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God." Weigh well if your motives will bear the examination and testing of a prudence conformable to the Spirit of Christ, Who wills that confession should be continual in His Church, and Who is content that this Sacrament be administered by men, not Angels.

Or for the
errors to
which you
are liable.

CXLI. Let us see wherein you are deficient as regards your penitents. Perhaps you fear that you have not sufficient knowledge? Experience teaches us that, out of a hundred confessions, ninety require nothing more than ordinary science. Again, you will say that you have been unsuccessful in your confessional work, and I answer, Do you know any Confessor, however learned, who never makes a mistake? Add to this, that such mistakes may not always arise from ignorance, but from embarrassment, especially with a beginner; or they may arise from want of thought, or through forgetfulness of well-known and important matters, arising out of the number of things heard, or from outer distractions. Woe be to the Church of God, if the remedy for these evils is to be neglecting the work! Surely the best remedy for your mistakes is to take courage, commend yourself

more earnestly to God, take more care in future, and acquire, by diligence in your work, such facility as will give you a calm mind and heart, and so enable you to do it better. If your mistakes are heavy and serious, leave the practice for a time, while you study, but never give it up. If your mistakes are trivial and rare, and you are authorised to hear confessions, you must run the risk which the confessional necessarily involves.

CXLII. In order to avoid mistakes, it is a good plan; 1. Before you begin to hear Confessions, to ask some well-skilled Confessor to make a supposed confession to you, so as to acquire the practical use of what you already know. By this means, you will learn among other things how to interrogate on certain leading points, where a denial dispenses you from proceeding further. Thus, e. g. a person accuses himself of having had bad thoughts; before enquiring as to their nature, ask whether he indulged them, because if he did not consent to them, it is needless to go further. You will also learn how to interrogate your penitent concerning matters which are practical, and likely to be his difficulties, without meddling with unlikely, improbable troubles. Further you will learn which are the most useful counsels to give, as well as the most suitable penances.

Means whereby to avoid these perils.

2. After hearing confessions, you will do well to examine yourself as to how you have fulfilled your office, but do not be disheartened even if you feel that you have not done it well. Examine whether your error was essential or accidental. In the first case, repair it as soon as possible; in the second be

content with humbling yourself. The result of such self-examination will enable you to do better in future.

Counsels
for such
Confessors
as are liable
to tempta-
tion.

CXLIII. If you complain that numerous temptations beset you in the tribunal, I would first of all console you with the assurance that you will not yield to the temptations which you know and fear; for the fear of falling is one of the best gifts of the Holy Spirit. Through that holy fear He arms His servants against danger, and teaches them how to conquer themselves, so that they may be more pitiful to other men, and better able to direct them. If you had no fears, I should fear for you. I should question whether it be wise to urge you to a ministry wherein you would be so liable to fall from not fearing its perils, and consequently taking no precautions; for I do not deny that there are many perils. Fear then, and let your holy fear be life-long. "Blessed is the man that feareth always." But keep that fear within due limits, so that you do not become discouraged, and forsake your work; let it rather move you to renewed hope, and more earnest watchfulness, self-mistrust, and confidence in God. Such hope will not be in vain. Be sure that when you expose yourself to danger for so holy an object as the reconciliation of men with God, taking the while all due precautions, "He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way for you to escape." "Make a way" not only for your bare escape, but one through which you may win greater grace for yourself, and much gain to your penitents. Scaramelli relates in his ascetic Directory, how a certain priest named Conon, having charge of a Church dedicated to S.

John the Baptist, where he frequently was called upon to baptise adults, experienced great temptations in the exercise of this function of his ministry. Several times he determined to give it up, but he was urged to persevere. For a time he took fresh courage and went on; but one day, seeing a young woman coming to be baptized, he thought within himself that he should certainly fail this time, and took to flight. But as he went, one arrested him, saying, "Return to thy work; henceforth thou wilt find therein no temptation; but know that thou hast lost that bright coronet which thou wouldst have won by triumphing over these temptations." Conon resumed his office, and was no more tormented by temptations, but he lost the reward which victory over them would have won. Beware then, that you be not similarly discouraged, but on the contrary, trust in God that He will give you the victory, and crown your ministry with His eternal reward. But all the same, I would have you observe every due precaution.

CXLIV. Again, you may say that you wish to be free from your work, in order to give yourself more wholly to your own spiritual progress. Doubtless your first duty is to work out your own sanctification, but in so doing you are taking the best method for the advancement of that of others. When you have attained true holiness, you will have acquired the best of all sciences, experience in practical virtue, and in resisting vice; you will be more capable of teaching others. God will more abundantly bless your words, so that they may touch your penitents' hearts, softening, encouraging, and sanctifying them; and if you are thus filled with His Holy Spirit, you will often be

Counsels to
those who
only heed
their own
Sanctifi-
cation.

able to produce the desired result, speedily and with few words, which a less fervent Confessor will hardly effect with detailed repetition. Thus during a short space of time, you may be useful to many souls, while he who is lukewarm will spend much time in doing but little work.

CXLV. Seek then always to possess an earnest zeal for your own sanctification. This the Apostles possessed, filled as they were with the Holy Ghost, and confirmed in His grace; and in this spirit they committed the temporal charge of the faithful to their Deacons, in order to have more time themselves for prayer, and preaching. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." How much more need have we of much and constant prayer, who are so far below the Apostles in grace and all virtue! But zeal for his own sanctification should not hinder a priest from labouring for the sanctification of others; on the contrary that is a sacred duty committed to the Priesthood by God and the Church. The sublime gift of the Power of the Keys was not intrusted to you for nothing, or that you might hide it in a napkin; and the use thereof on behalf of others in the tribunal of penitence, is a most powerful means for your own sanctification, as I have already shewn. Exercise a wise discretion, neglecting neither the one nor the other of these duties, but learn so to combine them as to work, both for your own sanctification, and that of your brethren. We read of many Saints, who gave the night to prayer, while they devoted the day to God's service, and that of their brethren. But it is not every one, for whom

two or three hours' sleep will suffice, enabling them to devote the night to prayer after a day's toil. Retrench your sleep, your recreation, and the time given to your favorite pursuits, with discretion, duly considering the obligations of your office, which demands holiness in yourself and sanctification for others; and you may be sure of having time enough for prayer and meditation in the early morning, through the day, and in the evening, and yet you may be always ready to receive those who seek you. As the reaper pauses a moment in the shade to whet his scythe, thereby not losing time, but rather forwarding his labours, so you both may and ought to leave your Confessional-duties once in the course of each year, for the purpose of renewing your earnestness in Retreat; for sacred as your work is, it may in a measure exhaust your fervour. From the Retreat you will come forth again cleansed and kindled with fresh zeal to work on with renewed success for the salvation of souls.

CXLVI.* Make your work useful to yourself by purifying your intentions. In the administration of this Sacrament the Confessor should so regulate his intention, as that it may be wholly uninfluenced by any human respect, and seek nought save God's Glory, and the good of souls. Thus every time that he is summoned to the exercise of his sacred function in the Confessional, he will raise his heart to God, directing his intention to that end, and remember diligently that he is about to wash his penitent in the Most Precious Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Inasmuch too as there are many dangers in the ad-

On the necessity of prayer.

* S. Charles p. 13-15.

ministration of this Sacrament, such as failing rightly to decide concerning special cases and their obligations ; giving absolution to the unworthy : or being himself more or less polluted by the impurities he has to hear told out ; no priest should ever hear a confession without offering some brief prayer to God, that he may have grace and light to preserve him from error, and to enable him so to cleanse the souls of his penitents, that he himself may contract no stain. He should also pray for the true conversion of those whom he confesses. Every Confessor should carry about with him those verses of the 51st Psalm, which have ever been the authorised prayer of the Church, and a copy of which or of some similar devotions ought to be fixed in all Sacristies and Confessionals, to be used carefully before beginning.

V. Cor mundum crea in me, Deus.

R. Et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.

V. Ne projicias me a facie Tua.

R. Et Spiritum sanctum Tuum ne auferas a me.

V. Redde mihi lætitiā salutaris Tui.

R. Et Spiritu principali confirma me.

V. Docebo iniquos vias Tuas.

R. Et impii ad Te convertentur.

V. Libera me de sanguinibus, Deus, Deus salutis meæ.

R. Et exultabit lingua mea justitiā Tuam.

Domine, Deus Omnipotens, propitius esto mihi peccatori, ut digne possim tibi gratias agere ; qui me indignum propter Tuam magnam misericordiam ministrum fecisti officii sacerdotalis, et me exiguum humilemque mediatorem constituisti ad orandum et intercedendum ad Dominum nostrum Jesum Christ-

um Filium Tuum pro peccatoribus et ad pœnitentiam revertentibus. Ideoque, dominator Dominus, qui omnes homines vis salvos fieri et ad agnitionem veritatis venire, qui non vis mortem peccatorum, sed ut convertantur et vivant, -suscipe orationem meam, quam fundo pro famulis et famulabus Tuis, qui ad pœnitentiam venerunt; ut des illis spiritum compunctionis, resipiscant a diaboli laqueis quibus adstricti tenentur, et ad Te per dignam satisfactionem revertantur. Per eundem Dominum: &c."

CXLVII.^b To prayer add disinterestedness. If <sup>Disinter-
estedness.</sup> disinterestedness is necessary to the secular judge, how much more to the Confessor who is a judge of consciences. This was a point which S. Philip Neri was continually urging upon the priests of his congregation, and he was foremost in practising what he taught. Giving himself up, as he did, to the labours of the Confessional, he at various times received tempting offers from his penitents; but he always refused everything, saying that he would not have any reward in this life for his labours. If he ever received any money, it was solely for the Church and the poor, and he insisted that all his sons in the faith should do the same; giving, as one of the first rules to those who were beginning their career in the Confessional, "never to touch a penitent's purse." He was wont to say to them that souls and riches could not both be won at once; and to his penitents he often repeated S. Paul's words, "I seek not yours, but you." S. Philip always recommended Confessors to have nothing to do with the testamentary arrangements of their flock, know-

^b S. Philip Neri.

ing how easy it is to bring suspicion upon the priesthood, even where everything is done with the best and purest intentions. He used to say that the slave of avarice would never make any real advance in holiness; experience had taught him that it was easier to convert the libertine than the covetous man; and he called avarice the plague of souls. If an avaricious penitent asked leave to fast, S. Philip would reply. "No my son, I would rather that you gave alms;" and he would say to such, "He who loves money will never be holy." One of his sayings was, "If young men would shun luxury, old men avarice, we should have a world of saints." In a word he considered disinterestedness to be so necessary and profitable a virtue that he was wont to say, "Give me ten men of true detachment, and I will convert the world;" adding to the Confessors of his own congregation, "God will not let you want anything, only give good heed that in the enjoyment of His gifts you do not lose His Spirit."

CHAPTER III.

On the precautions needful to a Confessor.

CXLVIII. *Zeal for your own sanctification requires not only that actual state of grace which is necessary for the due administration of this Sacrament, but further it demands that you maintain an habitual state of grace, never to be lost by any mortal sin. You ought moreover to preserve habitual watchfulness against trivial faults, especially such as are obvious and frequent, and diligently to practise all Christian virtues as becomes a priest, the teacher and minister of holiness. How can you inspire your penitents with an exceeding horror of vice, if you yourself yield to it? or a true and practical love for that virtue which you set at nought in your own life? How can you teach them to be ready to forgive, if your own pride is quick to take offence? how can you preach unvarying patience amid family troubles, if you cannot control your own weariness in listening to your penitent, so that your example teaches exactly the reverse of your words? How can you kindle others

Zeal for
his own
sanctifica-
tion.

* Prêtre Sanctifié No. 120-129.

with Divine Love, if your own heart is not filled with It, but rather with the love of worldly pleasures and interests, so that you have no real feeling of the truths you enjoin? Either you will not know what to say, or you will speak so mechanically, that your penitent will not be touched by your words; but if you are truly confirmed in God's grace, and earnestly bent on doing all which you teach, then indeed you will not be lacking in warm earnest thoughts and words, such as will penetrate men's hearts; and you may reckon confidently on the special help which the Lord never denies to His faithful ministers. If your life is altogether free from worldly contamination, and devoted to the practice of holiness, so that your penitents never see anything in you opposed to what you inculcate in the sacred tribunal, they will come to you far more profitably, respecting and venerating you; whereas any ground for scandal in your life necessarily damages both minister and ministry.

He must
be always
in a state
of grace.

CXLIX. To live in an habitual state of grace is necessary for you, not only in order that you may administer this sacrament more profitably, but even duly; for if you often fall into mortal sin, needs must be that you profane your office by exercising it under such miserable circumstances. You are liable to be called to confess some one at any moment; you must either refuse, whereby the mischief done to the penitent may be incalculable; or you must hastily excite yourself to perfect contrition; and how can that be easy for you, which you rightly consider so difficult for your penitents? The only alternative is the painfully dangerous one

of taking your place in the sacred tribunal in a state of mortal sin, a terrible addition to your sin, it may be to the perdition of your soul. Dare you, God's enemy, unworthily dispense His Blood, His grace? The guilty man, your penitent, may leave the confessional cleansed and sanctified, if he came with fitting dispositions, while you, his judge, will leave it condemned. If the ministry of a confessor is beset with dangers, even for a good man, how can one in your condition hope to escape? There is but too great danger, that you will add fresh crimes to your account by an undue indulgence to faults in others which you have not overcome in yourself; or worst of all, being the cause of temptation to others, therein proving yourself no spiritual father, but rather a ravening wolf; no minister of God, but of the devil; no physician, but the murderer of souls. Thus you see that for you it is not only necessary to keep yourself in a state of grace as for all the faithful, in order to avoid that damnation which may be the result of a mortal sin; but you require to be ever in a state of grace, in order that you may be able fitly to assist others by ministering the Sacrament of reconciliation. It is a ministry which especially requires positive fervour; your ministrations will be altogether different at those seasons when you have kindled your heart through fervent prayer, from what they are when you suffer yourself to grow tepid and negligent.

CL. I have dwelt upon the necessity of maintaining yourself continually in a state of grace, with a view to the better ministration of this Sacrament; but the importance of confessional-work is so

On purity
of intention.

great, that if unfortunately you are not uniformly devout, so long as you have not given cause for scandal, and that you have carefully sought to return to a state of grace, I would not have you renounce your office. You may still be able to do good to others. God permits that the worth of Absolution should not depend upon the holiness of the priest, and He may allow some good to pass through your counsels to your penitents, unworthy as you are. Moreover the practice of your ministry may be your best way of making up for lost time, and obtaining the grace of a lasting conversion; and while labouring with zeal and love for others, you may keep your own needs in sight, applying secretly to yourself all the counsels, pious affections, and other means which you make use of for your penitents in this school of holiness. But if you are deficient in this first precaution, i. e. an habitual state of grace and fervour, you will need my second precaution all the more.

CLI. No human motive ought to take you to the sacred tribunal, or keep you there; but the sole desire of pleasing God, and helping souls. These are the only intentions meet for a ministry in which you represent our Blessed Lord Himself before men and Angels; and they are absolutely necessary to win that aid of the Holy Spirit, which alone can save you from hindering yourself or others, which alone can enable you to promote their salvation and your own. But how could you hope for it, if you were actuated in these most weighty affairs by anything save a divine motive?

CLII. Do not delude yourself into a belief that you possess this high intention, if you are practically

contradicting and setting it aside, as you must be, if you do not receive all penitents alike; if you prefer confessing people of a certain rank to poor people, the educated to the ignorant, women to men. All these souls are equal in God's sight, redeemed by the same Blood, destined to enjoy the same eternal joy, and equally capable of honouring God; so that you fail in your high intention, if you are earnest patient and gentle with some, and harsh impatient and wearied with others; if you care more that the world may see your confessional thronged with penitents, than that God should see you really tending and healing a few; if you seek any temporal gain by means of your penitents; if you are jealous of any of your brethren who are more sought after than yourself; if you are annoyed when one of your penitents leaves you for some other Confessor; if you try to draw persons from their ordinary Confessor to yourself. Be careful then always to go to your confessional-work with this high intention, and pray to our Lord that He will preserve you in it all through the exercise of your ministry. One admirable method of cultivating it is to take special delight in receiving the poor. With them you have nothing to fear from vanity, human respect, or too tender feeling; you will work for them with greater merit, often with better fruit, and it may be that they will pray for you with more abounding gratitude than the rich.

CLIII. You must turn to God for other aid, as well as for the grace of a high intention; saying, "Da mihi sedium Tuarum assistricem sapientiam.

Cor mundum crea in me, Deus," &c. You will need a double grace in order that, instead of doing harm, you may do good both to yourself and to others in a work so altogether supernatural, and beyond your human skill as is the sinner's reconciliation with his God. Therefore consider the "cloud of witnesses," the Blessed Virgin, the Saints and Angels who behold you, and invoke our Dear Lord's special aid, not merely when you begin your work, but continually as you meet with any difficulty; whether it be with respect to your decision as doctor, exciting compunction and prescribing remedies as physician, or giving sentence or imposing penance as judge. Such prayers will not be in vain. God not unfrequently vouchsafes to bestow His aid most evidently to His faithful servants in this ministry of love.

Of the
guardian-
ship of the
heart.

CLIV. Thus surrounded with precautions, approach confidently to the Sacred Tribunal; but do not cease to keep an habitual watch over your own heart, so as to check every evil movement, and to preserve a holy fervour within you. Remember that you are liable to irregular impulses of vanity, impatience, perverse tendencies; which, unconsciously to yourself, may lead you to laxity or to an excessive severity, so that you may either give hasty absolution or dismiss a penitent unwisely; you may neglect duly examining his wounds and applying the right remedies; or even you may pervert this Sacrament from its legitimate end, which is to kindle an exceeding horror of sin in the minds of others, into a subtle means of feeding evil passions and sin in your own mind. Watch diligently therefore over

your own heart, and let a perpetual lively sense of God's Presence maintain therein so great fervour that you may be able to kindle the hearts of others. It is a useful habit, before applying the Precious Blood to the cleansing of souls, to offer each confession that you hear to one of the Saviour's Five Wounds, forming suitable affections, and through that Sacred Wound, asking of our Redeemer or of God the Father, that your labours may be blessed to yourself and your penitent and to God's Glory. If further, you throw your whole heart into every act of contrition, applying to yourself the prayers you suggest to your penitents, you will have found the way of making confession a sort of continual prayer and meditation, which will preserve you from many faults, and keep alive in you a great fervour and recollection, by which you will win rich blessings to yourself and to your penitents.

CLV. But it is useless to hope that you can keep due watch over your heart in the confessional, unless you also keep it over your senses. 1. Your eyes. You should avoid fixing your eyes upon the women you are actually confessing, as well as on those who are waiting around; and also you should not look inquisitively about the Church. Neglect of this rule exposes you to the dangers of inattention to what you are hearing, and of giving scandal to others who, though at a distance, often watch you when in the Confessional more than you are aware. No penitent would select for his Confessor the priest whom he had seen gazing about while occupied in the Confessional. You also expose yourself to many

*Custody of
the senses.*

dangerous temptations; for the enemy of souls is specially on the alert against you when you are carrying on this ministry which is so fatal to his interest. 2. Your tongue. In what God requires, He will grant His special protection both to the penitent who is constrained to acknowledge, and to you who are bound to hear, impure things. But in such cases you will need a twofold portion of reserve, both in your choice of words to express such matters, and in confining yourself to what is strictly necessary for the evident and notable needs and benefit of the penitent, especially in cases where, in seeking to secure the material integrity of a confession, you might risk much greater things. On this subject I will go into further detail in No. 167 and 168. As a general rule, seek to be "*brevis et austerus*" on all subjects with women. Do not omit any thing that is necessary for their soul's health, but carefully avoid long discourses, even upon spiritual matters. It is but too easy for some less pure feeling to glide into lengthy intercourse, when duty does not require it, and then far more is lost than gained.

Precau-
tions in
dealing
with wo-
men.

CLVI. Further you must frequently ask God to enlighten your heart, so that you may not be overtaken by the hidden wiles of passion, which will seek to persuade you that your prolonged and superfluous intercourse is in fact short, reserved, and needful. Those who are waiting their turn in the Confessional will judge differently from you. I do not say that they are right; they judge without any knowledge of facts, and often doubtless, with the best intentions, a Confessor cannot be brief or

retrench the useless diffuseness which is poured out upon him. There are some persons, who though used to frequent the Sacraments, are tempted in such various ways, or who are so minute, so confused, so troubled, and so distressed if they do not tell everything, and so unable to tell it quickly, that they really require a long time for their necessary treatment. In such cases, no fear of remark should make you neglect your duty in God's sight as spiritual father, judge, and physican. But you should, all the more, study to make your general intercourse with women short and severe, without omitting anything necessary. Of course by severe, I do not mean that you should scare them with harsh words, or repress the perfect confidence they ought to have in you ; but that such confidence should never degenerate into familiarity, and always be tempered by the respect due to their spiritual father ; who, while easy of access to his children through his hearty desire for their salvation, should also inspire them with deep veneration for his authority as judge, physician, and above all, as God's representative. Such veneration will avert any low or earthly affection which you might feel towards a spiritual child, or she for you. This circumspection is especially necessary where your penitent's youth or attractions, the subjects you have to deal with, their great piety, or their malice are liable to make any unwonted impression on your heart or on their own. Do not be surprised at my including piety among the perils ; it has more than once been a stumbling-block to imprudent Confessors, who, beginning with a spiritual esteem, have insensibly slipped into earthly and carnal attachments.

To avoid all danger of such a misfortune, you should abstain from all expressions of a tender nature; thus while you may address a young man as "my dear son," prudence dictates that you should not call a young woman "my dear daughter." Again, you will do well to confine your intercourse within the strictest limits with such women as acknowledge to great weakness or great faults in the matter of purity. Your brevity in dealing with such topics will help to give them a horror of those sins, and will preserve you from the temptations which Satan may strive to excite by reason of the proneness of these people to sin. You cannot fail to appreciate how awful a sacrilege would be any such abuse of a Sacrament ordained to banish sin and the devil from souls, in order to make them the living temples of the Holy Spirit.

CLVII. If such brevity and austerity are necessary in the confessional, how much more in your dealings without it in spiritual direction. In this you must be specially wary, and watchful over yourself. The venerable Avila never admitted any woman to confer with him in his house, always seeing them in church or the confessional. You should take as your first precaution then, that the place where you see women be open and public; and secondly, to watchfulness over your heart add a guarded speech and downcast eyes. Still further, in order to avoid all risk to your soul, be chary in granting, and rapid in conducting these spiritual interviews. Let the usefulness and comfort of such occasional intercourse be tempered by the wholesome severity of frequent refusals, so that while

your spiritual children do not lack anything necessary for their guidance, there may be, on the other hand, nothing superfluous, so as to be an occasion of danger, scandal, or criticism.

CLVIII^b. You require great reserve in dealing with women in the confessional. With the young, you should ordinarily be rather severe than affable; not allowing them to talk face to face with you, still less permitting them to kiss your hand. When confessing them, do not appear to know who they are; there are some women who pretend to be pious, but who do not accuse themselves sincerely, if they see that the confessor recognises them. Prudence forbids you to look at female penitents, or to watch them as they leave the Confessional. The Confessor should not speak to them in Church save in the tribunal; he should shun every kind of familiarity; not receiving little presents, or going to his penitents' houses, except in the case of grave sickness. Then he should use the utmost prudence, keeping the door ajar while confessing, so that he may be seen from without, and averting his face from the sick person, especially if she be a pious woman, towards whom it is more easy to feel affection. A venerable person used to say that when the devil seeks to form an undue intimacy between pious people, he begins with the pretext of virtue, and then under this slips on from the love of virtue to that of the individual. S. Thomas quotes S. Augustine, "*Sermo brevis et rigidus cum his mulieribus habendus est; nec tamen, quia sanctiores sunt, ideo minus cavendæ; quo enim sanctiores fuerint, eo magis alli-*

^b S. Liguori, n. 113.

ciunt." The Angelic Doctor proceeds to say, "Licet carnalis affectio sit omnibus periculosa, ipsis tamen magis perniciosa, quando conversantur personæ, quæ spiritualis videtur; nam quamvis principium videatur purum, tamen frequens familiaritas domesticum est periculum, quæ quidem familiaritas quanto plus crescit, infirmatur principale motivum et puritas maculatur." Pious people, so writes the holy Doctor, do not perceive all this at first; for the devil does not begin by shooting arrows obviously poisoned, but such as make slight impressions on the heart: soon the intercourse ceases to be that of angels, and becomes that of earthly beings; looks and words are exchanged which still bear a semblance of the original piety; a great desire of one another's society arises, and thus "Spiritualis devotio convertitur in carnalem." How many good Priests have been the victims of such affections, begun in piety, and have at last lost both piety and God Himself!

Confessors should not give themselves so wholly to confessing women as to refuse men who may seek them. It is a sad sight to see confessors giving their whole morning to young women-devotees, while they dismiss men or married women, who have perhaps left their household affairs with difficulty to find themselves rejected with, "I am busy, go to some one else!" so that perhaps such people will go on for months or years without the Sacraments. That is not hearing confessions for God's sake, but for one's own, nor can such Confessors expect any reward in their ministry. Far from saying, as some have done, that it is time wasted, I consider it a

work most acceptable to God to devote yourself to bringing souls to perfection. But good confessors, after the example of S. Philip Neri, S. John of the Cross, and S. Peter of Alcantara, hear confessions solely with a view to God. Such men always give the preference to a soul in need over the pious, who can easily be heard and helped at another time.

CLIX. ° You should seek to be a Saint in the tri-
bunal of reconciliation, your own holiness of life being the first condition. No kind of persuasion is so effectual as a good example; men believe what they see with their eyes, much more readily, than what they hear with their ears; and they are greatly influenced by the example of those who control and direct them; thus S. Gregory says, "*Illa namque vox magis cor penetrat quam dicentis vita commendat*^d." Nor must this example be merely that you are living in a state of grace, but in the diligent practice of virtue, and consecrating your life to works of piety and an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls. When I see a confessor who not only lives in an habitual state of grace, but who also burns with ardour to use all means for bringing souls to God, I see a treasure for the Church in him. But alas! it is sad in the present day to see so many who dishonour their sacred Ministry before the world by their irregular lives. The worst is that such men do not fear to hear confessions at times when they are themselves in mortal sin, or at least in doubt about it. Such confessors are guilty of sacrilege in every absolution which they give, opening the gates of hell for themselves while they open those of heaven to others.

Holiness of
life.

° B. Léonard No. 1, 5; 8. Pt. I.

^d Past. cura p. 2. c. 3.

It was a maxim of the Angelical Doctor that the Confessor when administering the Sacrament of penance is a living instrument of co-operation with the Chief Worker, God^e; so that it is not enough for him to live in a state of grace, in order to minister profitably to the salvation of sinners, but he must further diligently practise all virtue. That sacred ministry cannot but be carelessly exercised by a lukewarm, dissipated confessor, who is deficient in habits of prayer and mortification. His words will not be kindled with love, his reproofs will lack zeal, his counsels will not inspire confidence; he may even vitiate the Sacramental judgment, by absolving the unworthy, leaving the guilty unwarned, or yielding to the headstrong. His tongue will be tied in the tribunal; for how can he rebuke faults of which he himself is guilty? Hence it will follow that he will acquire a name for being very easy with respect to certain faults, whether voluptuousness, gambling, or the like; and men will seek him; so that sacrilegious confessions will accumulate, for no man will mend his life who purposely seeks a Confessor because he will not correct the penitent's faults. How much better were it for such a priest, if he had never received the power of the keys, inasmuch as his absolutions do but bind his own soul and those of others. Our Lord said to Judas, "woe to him by whom the Son of man is betrayed; it were good for that man if he had never been born!" and the words may be applied to such a confessor who imperils the souls of other men. The Holy Spirit has said that whoso doeth not good to himself, how shall he

* P. 3 qu. 64. art 8. ad 1.

† S. Matt. xxvi. 2.

do good to others? “^s Qui sibi nequam est, cui alii bonus erit?” And here, I would press upon you that weighty point which I have often urged upon the laity in Missions; i. e. that all should make a general confession, in order to renew their piety and put their conscience in order. There is nothing more important, in order to enjoy peace during life, or at the hour of death. And surely such re-kindling of fervour is even more necessary for priests. I do not mean that I am urging them to a general confession, which doubtless they have already made. If it so chances that they have not, I would freely say to such, “Make it now, for pity’s sake,” you need above all a peaceful conscience, of which a good life is the first foundation. But if you have made your general confession, make an extraordinary confession with a view to the main duties of your condition. I would suggest the following short and simple method.

CLX. Divide your life under two points: “^h Declina a malo, et fac bonum.” Examine first whether you obey the precept “declina a malo,” by avoiding whatever could give the slightest scandal. How fearful it would be to incur those terrible words; “Sicut populus, sic sacerdos.” Such men indulge in such vanities that they might be taken for priests of Venus and Diana rather than for ministers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they do not blush to be more dissolute and less reserved in word and manner than the laity! Alas! what shall I say of such men! I can but sorrowfully repeat the words of S. Gregoryⁱ: “Nullum magis præjudicium, quam a sacerdotibus

^s Eccles. xiv. 5.

^h Ps. xxxvi. 27.

ⁱ Epist. L. iv.

suis tolerat Deus." You will reply that your conscience does not reproach you with any such guilt, and I sincerely believe you. Nevertheless, review all the duties of your priesthood carefully, and first of all examine how you say the Divine Office. If you say it in community, examine whether you make the appointed pauses, or if you say it hastily, thinking only of the beginning and ending. Examine whether you celebrate the Communion with due respect, humility, and recollection; if you observe the directions exactly; if you are careful as to the consumption of the Holy Elements so as to shew forth your veneration for that great Sacrifice. What can be more miserable than to see the same priest playing at cards or dice in the evening, whom one saw in the morning at the Altar, celebrating irreverently. John d'Avila once whispered to such a priest, "Treat Him somewhat better; He is the Son of a venerable Father." I blush to speak of such crimes, but who has not heard it said when such a priest stands at the Altar, "See so and so, he is a first-rate sportsman; no gambler can stand against him; he is a man of pleasure!" Hear the sentence of such men from S. Bernard; "Heu! heu! Domine," he cries^k, "quia ipsi sunt in persecutione primi, qui in Ecclesiâ Dei videntur gerere principatum." I know that such abuses do not exist among you, but I also know that one such Priest is enough to destroy all respect for the whole priesthood. So let me say once more to all who are faithless to their duties, "Declina a malo," my dear brother in Christ, "Declina a malo."

CLXI. "Et fac bonum." It is not enough that

^k Ad Eug. L. iii.

a priest be virtuous for his own interest, he must be useful to his neighbour by his example, his doctrine, his works, his counsel. The materials of a church should never be used to build a common house, or for anything but ecclesiastical purposes; and even so the Priest, being consecrated to God by ordination, should employ himself solely in things which are holy and promote the glory of God. His home is the Church; his books, Holy Scripture; his business, to visit the poor, instruct the ignorant, administer the Sacraments. To this end he ought to divide his time between study, especially that of theology; spiritual reading, self-examination and prayer; in a word, he ought to follow a rule of life, and not to be desultory. But the two corner-stones on which the whole structure of his life should rest, are prayer and mortification. With respect to mental prayer, which after all is but a serious meditation upon the weighty matter of salvation, I would ask you to give it a half hour daily. If a poor man saw any one casting many pieces of gold into the river, it would be no wonder, were he to ask one for the love of God; and so, when I see so many priests wasting hours in sleep or recreation, I need scarcely hesitate to ask them to give half an hour, not for my sake, but for their own soul. If you were engaged in some important lawsuit, would you grudge bestowing half an hour daily upon it? But what temporal affair can matter nearly so much as the saving of our soul? Let every one then resolve daily to give half an hour to this duty. But you will never be successful in prayer, if you are not truly mortified. Happy indeed is the innocent man who has never sinned. I do not speak to such, I

address such as have sinned. There is no alternative; we must bear our penance in this world or in the next: which is best? Is not the body guilty of dragging us into evil through pursuit of its own pleasures? and ought it not therefore to bear the penalty? The gambler who has lost blames his cards; but we more justly blame our bodies. S. Francis of Assisi used to say that whoever allows everything that is permitted to his body, will end by allowing that which is not permitted; and experience proves it. Let us then be brave, and carry on a courageous mortification of self; let us mortify the body, eyes, tongue, taste, all the senses, and we shall win a reward of great peace. "I chastise my body and keep it under," were the words of S. Paul¹; and shall such as we are think that we need no mortification?

Prudence.

CLXII. To holiness add prudence. A Confessor requires the judge's prudence, and still more that of the physician. He requires it in order that he may examine carefully not merely into sin, but into its roots, its causes and occasions, so that he may apply the proper remedies. He ought to be reserved in his words; an inconsiderate Confessor may do great harm to himself and his penitent by a simple word. "^m In facie prudentis lucet sapientia," which Lirano explains by "Maturitatem et honestatem." He should then be circumspect in words, of modest and sober manners, such as are the result of thoughtfulness and devotion; and he will take care to wear his surplice and stole, according to rule. He will avoid all trifling actions which are unsuitable, such as an immoderate use of snuff, or the like. He should be

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

^m Prov. xvii. 24.

careful not to confess women out of the Confessional, except in extreme necessity, nor in the dark ; nor the sick, without leaving the door open. In a word, he should act in all things as a true Minister of God, preserving a kindly and modest exterior, which should never vary, or betray any weariness or vexation, which might lead others to suppose that his penitent has told him serious or distressing matters. The penitent should not kneel face to face with him, nor too close. These precautions may seem minute, but nothing should be spared, to give all possible solemnity to so sacred a ministry, and to avoid any shadow which could damage the respect due to the sacrament, or harm either the penitent or the Confessor's reputation. All our teachers and models have made this a special duty, both as to exterior and interior precautions.

CLXIII. " Inasmuch as it is a mortal sin to administer any Sacrament while in a state of mortal sin, all Confessors should beware of hearing confessions, if unhappily they are in such a condition, still more if under any ecclesiastical censure. But he who is filled with true zeal for souls, and earnestly desires to train them in all Christian virtue, to apply fitting remedies against sin, to defeat the wiles of the devil ; in short, to teach them to put off the old man and become new creatures, such a Priest will not be satisfied merely to avoid a state of mortal sin, but, knowing that in order to produce these results he must himself practise that which he teaches others, (inasmuch as example is far more powerful than words, and as it is hard to inculcate a virtue, of

The Confessor should aim at perfection.

■ S. Charles p. 6,7 ; 11, 12.

which we ourselves are devoid, he will diligently seek his own perfection, and practise everything that leads to it.

Exterior
precau-
tions.

CLXIV. It is not desirable to hear any confessions whatever, whether of men or women, in the houses of the laity, however high their rank, except in the case of sickness, and then, when the penitent is a woman, let the door be kept ajar. Confessionals should be in the more open parts of the church; and it is well to put up some notice directing people in general not to come too near; at all events the priest should make those people move who have come too near, before he begins hearing confessions.

CLXV. * There is no sacrament in which it more behoves us to maintain due gravity and solemnity, than that of Penance, in which we sit as God's appointed judges. You should wear cassock and surplice, stole and biretta; your countenance should be friendly but grave, and you should guard against allowing any expression of weariness or annoyance to rest on it, for fear of leading others to imagine that your penitent is telling you very dreadful things. Do not let the penitent kneel so that he should look into your face, nor speak quite into your ear.

Advice of
S. Philip
Neri.

CLXVI. S. Philip Neri advised all Confessors to have a grille between them and their female penitents; to avoid lengthy interviews, and to be rather severe in their intercourse than the contrary. Father Juvénal Ancina wrote to him from Naples for instruction as to his demeanour in the Confessional, especially with regard to women. The saint replied, "Do not be uneasy; the same thing happens to

* S. F. de Sales p. 624.

others. Only be careful not to take more interest in hearing these sins than others, or to be curious to know more than is absolutely necessary. Do not go into any details, except such as are necessary. Commend yourself to our Lord who never fails to come to our help with special grace in such a ministry, when we exercise it with charity and caution." He used to warn Confessors never to trust to themselves, however great their experience or age or their infirmities, but to avoid all occasion of sin. He advised them to confess young women in a Confessional, for fear shame should lead them to conceal anything.

CHAPTER IV.

On Interrogations.

Of ques-
tioning
the young
upon
purity.

CLXVII. * From what has been already said with respect to purity, you will see how easy it is in other matters to make up for the ignorance of a penitent; but it is impossible to be too reserved concerning purity; above all, when you risk the loss of what is of greater importance; and it is of greater importance not to teach evil to one who is ignorant of it, or to kindle passion in a heart, than to secure the material integrity of a confession. The lack of this, if not intentional, will not hinder that formal integrity which is necessary and sufficient to the value and fruit of the Sacrament; therefore never risk the greater good for the sake of the lesser. Thus, if you are hearing the confessions of children, speak so as to be understood only by those who are guilty. If a child confesses that he has had bad thoughts, ask him, of what kind? They will often prove to be childish revenge, &c. In such a case, go no further: and if you feel doubtful whether there is more behind, content yourself with reminding him that the Lord is present everywhere, so that he should never do that which he would not dare to do before his parents.

The same
subject
with
adults.

CLXVIII. With adults also you should be reserved and prudent, so as not to expose either yourself or your penitent to any risk. Seigneri, following other doctors, says "° If you should occasionally not speak of some circumstance which in itself is ne-

* Prêtre Sanctifié. 21-23, 28-30.

cessary to the integrity of the confession, do not be uneasy; the greater good should prevail. It is enough if he confess the kind of sin, without the way in which it has been committed, and if through ignorance or want of prudence the penitent attempts to tell it, explain kindly to him that it is not desirable."

CLXIX. On all subjects, as well as that of purity, you should avoid beginning interrogations, unless circumstances give you some just cause for supposing that the penitent has omitted anything he ought to confess, through shame or ignorance. If you mean to question a penitent concerning all the sins he might possibly commit, there will be no end to it, and you will make the Sacrament odious both to him and yourself, wearying him with a string of useless queries, of which you would be the first to complain, if they were put to you when making your own confession. Do not go beyond necessary things or what have probably occurred to your penitent. If for instance you know who the penitent is, and that he or she has lately been to confession, and you believe him to be good and well-instructed, you should let him accuse himself, and afterwards, if you think it necessary, you can put questions which seem to you necessary. In order not to confuse the penitent and make him forget what he had prepared in his self-examination, do not interrupt him; but defer your questions till the end, when you foresee that the confession will be short, judging by the short time elapsed since his last confession. In longer ones, if you are afraid of forgetting, you

Of interrogations in general.

• Conf. instruct. c. ii.

should only interrupt him to ask briefly what may be necessary, reserving all else for the end.

Of the
penitent's
ignorance
in matters
of faith.

CLXX. You must also supply a remedy to your penitent's ignorance ; and that, first of all with regard to the most important things. Above all, attend to that ignorance which concerns the most necessary fundamental dogmas. But here again, be sure you know what you are about, or you will torment both yourself and your penitent needlessly. Some persons know substantially what is necessary, although at first sight they may appear not to do so. For instance if such people are asked abstract general questions, e. g. "What are the principal mysteries ? What has the Son of God done for us ? Wherefore are we bound to believe the verities of the Faith ?" they do not know how to reply, either because (as I have often observed) the Catechisms which they have learned were worded differently, or because they rarely hear such subjects spoken of, and understand them but little. Questioned suddenly, they cannot remember the right answer at once, they grow confused, and make mistakes. You should encourage such people ; give them time, and put simple direct questions to them, as for instance, "How many Gods are there ? How many Persons in One God ? Did the Son of God become Man for us ? Is it not God Who has revealed the verities of the Faith ?" If they were unable to answer such questions as these, it would be obvious that they were ignorant in essentials ; but often they will answer quite sufficiently well to merit Absolution ; you will find that their faith is all right, although they explain themselves badly. Especially you will find that

they do not really confuse the formal motive of Faith with that of belief (*credibilité*). They do not distinguish between the two by an effort of mind, but by the secret and insensible grace which is requisite to the wisest, in order that they may be free from all other motive save that Divine Light which is the cause and origin of their firm adhesion to the revealed truth. As to the formal acts of theological virtues, before you pronounce such persons as are ignorant of them, to be unfit for Absolution, ascertain whether at any rate they do not know the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and whether they understand the truths contained therein as far as can be expected of ignorant-laity; and also if they can make the act of contrition. The Creed is an admirable act of faith upon the mysteries necessary to belief and practice. The Lord's Prayer contains hope; we should not ask God's gifts if we did not hope in Him; the word "Father" indicates the root and motive of Divine Goodness; and the act of contrition is at once an act of perfect love and sorrow.

Do not say that the motives of faith and hope are not expressed therein; in the first place you see against whom such an objection would be levelled; and secondly it is certain that these motives are contained in their acts, which otherwise would not be theological or divine. Now, in order that they should be infused efficaciously in these acts, so as to be their cause and form, it is not needful that they be expressly enunciated; it suffices that they have been learned and remembered. In such a case, either virtually, or by very feeble, almost unconscious acts, which the infused habit of these virtues

forms in the soul, they tell upon the acts themselves ; and of this everybody, even the educated, may have experience. Thus when making an act of faith in the Real Presence of our Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar, one says " I believe that our Lord *is Present* ;" but one does not often add the motive ; " Because God has revealed it." Yet without expressing this, one knows oneself to have made a veritable theological act of faith, because the reason that one believes this is, that one knows and believes habitually, that it is a truth revealed by an Infallible God in His Word. Still more in external acts of religion, nobody doubts that they are performing an act of religion, although they may not accompany the external action with an expressed act of faith in the Real Presence. We only bend the knee because we believe. It is true that we believe with a faith and a motive which you may call what you will, habitual, virtual, implicit, weak ; but nevertheless sufficient, although unfelt. If then you find that your penitent knows the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and what is contained in them, as well as the act of contrition, do not dismiss him as unworthy of Absolution, even if he is ignorant of the formulas now used as acts of faith, hope, and charity. Forty or sixty years ago, these acts did not exist, as we learn from those born before 1720, who, even when carefully taught in their youth, never heard of them. At the same time I most highly value the use of those acts, which, expressing as they do so clearly the end and object of faith, hope &c., are most useful to the faithful ; and I should advise you to recommend your penitents to learn them, and recite them frequently.

CLXXI. But if it be clear that the penitent is ignorant of that which is necessary in order to receive sanctifying grace, you have two courses open to you; 1) to explain to him the duty of learning, recommending or obliging him as a penance to attend instructions and catechisings, and to read or listen to books concerning Christian doctrine. 2) The second course is quicker. Teach him briefly yourself, and, without waiting till he can learn these things by heart, make him repeat slowly and devoutly after you these formulas, so that he should *actually* believe, hope, love, and repent rightly; and then, if there be no other difficulty, give him absolution. This is the best course to take with grown-up people of a certain position, who would be ashamed to be asked if they knew the first truths of the Faith, while yet the confession leads you to believe that they are ignorant. Help such persons gently and effectually by making them repeat these acts, after which you can inquire if they habitually do repeat these or similar formulas, and according to what you ascertain, you can then make use of the first remedy. Combined with the fatal ignorance which makes people unfit for absolution, we too often find ignorance of that true contrition which is necessary for this Sacrament. How many there are who, while they are scrupulous in examining themselves, yet hardly bestow a thought on their repentance! Some content themselves with an attempt at contrition after leaving the tribunal of penance; others wait to be helped to make some such act by their Confessor; or they make one while he says the short prayers which precede absolution. Therefore, let one

Remedies
for ignorance
in
matters of
faith.

of the points you press most upon your penitents be repentance and firm resolution of amendment. Teach them the extreme importance thereof, suggest the means of obtaining it, i.e. prayer to God, weighing their own motives, and earnest desire for it; advise them to make acts of attrition and perfect contrition from time to time, not as an obligation, but as an useful practice. Strengthened by such precautions, they need entertain no doubts as to their contrition, and that they have dispositions requisite for approaching the Sacraments.

Remedies
for ignorance of
what constitutes
sin.

CLXXII. There is another kind of ignorance which demands your full attention; such as may be the cause of formal sin to your penitent or those belonging to him; or of scandal to others. For instance, if a person entertains a friendship or familiar intercourse, which is liable to cause him to offend God, although he does not see it, you must not leave him in ignorance; for that ignorance will be of no use against the approach of danger in the hour of temptation. Therefore warn him plainly. In the same way, warn parents who either through ignorance or negligence leave their children to grow up without due instruction in the first principles of the faith, prayer and Sacraments; or who do not shield them from exterior or interior dangers. Such children will easily lose their innocence, and form bad habits which may perhaps never be conquered. Your zeal should preserve and avert such a misfortune. The same thing applies to heads of houses or workshops, who do not interfere to prevent bad language or dangerous intermixture of the sexes among those they employ; or who do not give them sufficient

opportunities of frequenting the Sacraments, hearing the Word of God, &c. You should also give heed carefully to counteract such ignorance as leads men to give scandal to others, whether by acts of omission or commission. For instance ; if a priest celebrates too rapidly, even if he does it through ignorance and want of thought, the laity will be justly scandalized. As a rule, the more any one is liable to be remarked upon by others, who are likely to suppose what he does to be right, the more important it becomes to warn him ; his bad example is equally harmful, whether it be in ignorance or not. For this reason it is specially important that all heads of families, public officers, ecclesiastical or civil, even, as Benedict XIV. observes, those who frequent the Sacraments, should be instructed and duly warned lest they set forth a bad example. These last are specially injurious to the public. If then you find such persons failing in outward conduct, correct them as best you can ; and for all other less harmful ignorance, use the remedies, which I have indicated No. 63 and shall give in No. 313.

ARTICLE I.

INTERROGATION OF UNEDUCATED PENITENTS.

CLXXIII. *To aid in your ministry, I propose pointing out those questions which the confessor should *ordinarily* put to such penitents as are ignorant, and who do not seem to have made a due

Of the 1st
and 2nd
com-
mand-
ments.

* Liguori. No. 21-60.

examination of conscience; to which I purpose to add certain practical remarks. With reference to the First Commandment ask; 1) If the penitent knows the principal mysteries of the Faith? For if he is ignorant of the four great truths, i. e. the existence of a God Who rewards the good and punishes the evil; the mystery of the Holy Trinity, or those of the Incarnation, Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, he is not capable of absolution. Ascertain also, if he knows the Creed, the Commandments, and the Sacraments, in substance, at all events. The B. Leonard of Port-Maurice remarks that a confessor is bound to instruct ignorant penitents in the mysteries of the faith, at least in these four principal ones, and he objects to the habit of sending such persons away to be taught by others, which generally results in their continuing in ignorance. It is better to teach them in few words the principal truths, causing them to make an act of faith, hope, love of God and contrition, with a recommendation that they should learn the other truths "*de necessitate præcepti*" more in detail.

As to people of a higher class, and yet ignorant, who would be ashamed were they so questioned, the same author suggests that the Confessor should say, "Let us make acts of the chief virtues together:" adding to the act of Faith, "O my God, I believe all that the Church sets before me, because Thou hast revealed the truth to Thy Church, and Thou art Truth itself; especially I believe that Thou art One God in Three Persons; I believe that Thy Son became Man, and died upon the Cross for us; that He rose again, and ascended into Heaven,

whence He will come to judge all men, calling the good to Paradise, and condemning the bad to hell for all eternity."

2) Ask whether he has fallen into or led others into any superstitious practices, or employed any to co-operate in his sin? It is necessary to teach the ignorant that superstitions are always forbidden, even if they are practised out of charity or necessity. As to what is to be considered superstition, consult my larger Theology ^b.

3) Ask if in past time he has concealed any sin out of shame? This question is specially necessary with ignorant people and women who make but rare confessions. You can say, "Have you any uneasiness as to your past life? Let this be a good confession; speak out freely concerning whatever troubles you, do not be afraid, explain all your doubts fully." A holy Priest was wont to say that by such words he had saved many souls from sacrilege. If you find that the penitent has been guilty of sacrilegious confessions, ascertain their number, asking how often he confessed and communicated while concealing his sins; and whether he remembered the sacrilege every time that he received the sacraments; because it sometimes happens, that people have made some sacrilegious confession especially in childhood, and have forgotten it afterwards. Such penitents are not obliged to repeat confessions made during this period of forgetfulness. Ask also whether they knew that they were guilty of sin by thus receiving the Sacraments? It is well to put these questions as to sacrilege at the begin-

^b Lib. 3. n. 14.

ning of the confession, for fear lest, when put later, sacrilege may be already committed, and the confession must be repeated. Be sure you impress upon those who have hidden their sins, the enormity of the crime they have committed in trampling under foot their Saviour's Blood.

4) Ask the penitent if he performed his penance, if he forgot it, or deferred it to another time, or in order to get it changed ; and whether he knew he was doing wrong so to defer it ?

5) As to scandal, ask if he has tried to make others sin, and whether he has forwarded the sins of others. With respect to scandal, you may ask the penitent if he has co-operated in other person's sins ; but you must distinguish between formal and material co-operation. Formal co-operation takes place in impurity, or in assistance given to a robber or murderer, in which case you really co-operate in his evil intention by encouraging him to sin ; that is formal and always illicit co-operation, because it is intrinsically evil. Material co-operation is, when we co-operate in the action of another, indifferent in itself, but on this occasion used to a bad end, as e. g. giving wine to a man who means to get drunk. Such co-operation may be lawful, where there is sufficient and legitimate reason for it. This is a point of the greatest importance, and I have been at great pains to describe it. Refer to my reasons and resolutions concerning it*.

Of the 3rd
command-
ment.

CLXXIV. The Confessor must inquire concerning perjuries, infringed vows, and blasphemies. As to the first, ask the penitent if he has taken any

* Lib. 2. n. 65, V. *Ad distinguendum*, et lib. 3. n. 571.

false oaths, and whether before a justice or otherwise. By perjury before a court of law, he has sinned against religion and justice, and consequently it may be needful that he should unsay what he said, or make reparation. Ask by what he swore, by God, or upon his own soul. Here I would remark that many ignorant people do not consider perjury to be a mortal sin when it harms no one. Thus they swear by a Sacred Name when angry with children or servants, "I will do so and so to you if you do it again;" without intending to execute their threat.

As to vows, the Confessor must first of all ascertain, whether what the penitent has made, is really a vow, as simple people are apt to confuse mere desires and resolutions with vows. To this end it is of little use to ask, as some Confessors do, whether they intended to bind themselves under pain of mortal sin? To such a question ignorant people will readily answer, No. It is better to ask whether, in making the vow, they thought that they would be guilty of mortal sin if they did not fulfil it? By this means it is easier to know whether they intended to bind themselves by a vow, "*sub gravi*." Should you find that there was a genuine vow, you will ask the penitent if he believed himself guilty of mortal sin in delaying its fulfilment, or whether he thought that his intention of fulfilling it later excused him?

This seems the proper place to make some remarks concerning the commutation or dispensation of vows. Ordinary vows may be commuted by bishops, who can delegate their power to others. As to commutation, you should not be scrupulous; any reasonable motive will suffice; it is enough to induce you to commute a

vow, that the penitent will be less exposed to violate it. Do not be anxious to substitute something equivalent; a measured equivalent is not so much necessary, as a moral one. Ask the penitent what are his ordinary, or most acceptable works which are not of absolute obligation, and commute his vow for those. The safest of all commutations, is frequenting the Sacraments. Perpetual vows may well be commuted into vows for a time, if a due proportion be observed; and in like manner real vows may be commuted into personal, and vice versa.

Ask the penitent if he has blasphemed in the presence of his children or servants? in which case the sin of scandal is added to that of blasphemy. Blasphemers are not to hold themselves excused, because long habit or violent passion hindered them from knowing what they said. Although they may have a less vivid consciousness than those who are not used to blasphemy, they have an actual knowledge, which makes the act deliberate and mortal, though their habit of sin prevents their weighing it, as a more sensitive conscience would. Hence they will often retain but a slight remembrance of their sin, or say that they did not notice it. But a good Confessor must not heed this, he should not even ask whether they noticed it; he must treat every such word that they consciously uttered, as a real blasphemy.

Of the 4th
command-
ment.

CLXXV. Ask the penitent, whether when he might have been to Church he omitted to go. If he has neglected service, ascertain if the reason was sufficient, as when shepherds cannot leave their flocks, parents their children, or the sick, &c. &c. Ask if he has

eaten forbidden food on the appointed fast-days of the Church?

CLXXVI. Ask children, 1) if they have nourished hatred towards their parents, which is a double sin against charity and piety; 2) if they have disobeyed them in serious and just matters, such as going out at night, gambling, frequenting bad society, &c. I say in *just* matters, because as regards the choice of a state of life, children are not bound to obey their parents. In truth parents sin grievously when they force their children to marry, or to take Orders or monastic vows; or when they deter them by unjust means from the state of life they seek to follow. 3) Ask if they have been wanting in respect to their parents, either by act or by word, calling them names or mocking them. If children have been thus wanting, they are bound to make reparation, by asking pardon, if possible in the presence of those who witnessed the fault; and it is better this reparation be made before you give absolution.

Of the 5th
command-
ment.

Ask of parents whether they have attended to their children's education, instructing them in the Faith, and taking them to Church and the Sacraments; keeping them from evil company. Ask if they have given scandal to their children by blasphemy; if they have neglected to correct them for sin; if they have exposed them to any temptation through carelessness; or neglected to give them proper support, or forced them to marry, or take Holy Orders. Such are mortal sins. Ask masters, if they have reproved their servants for blasphemy, or for neglecting the public worship; or for any indecent behaviour, especially in harvest and similar times, when masters are

bound to take whatever precautions they can against evil. Ask husbands, if they have duly supplied the wants of the families; and wives, if they have angered their husbands, or neglected their duties as wives. Many men are led into sin by their wives' neglect of home duties.

Of the 6th
command-
ment.

CLXXVII. Ask the penitent, if he has wished any serious evil to his neighbour or taken any pleasure in any harm that has happened to him? Here observe that if he wished such harm to his enemy as death, infamy, poverty, or the like, he is bound to explain. The sin is distinct and different, according as he really wished to inflict the evil, or desire specifically and specially that it should happen; and according to the opinion of theologians, it is different if he desired such evil, "*sub uno genere mali*," that is to say, as the means of ruin. And here it is a great torment to the unfortunate Confessor, to have to judge whether the habitual imprecations of such coarse penitents are mortal or venial sin. In order to ascertain, ask the penitent whether at the moment he deliberately wished the fulfilment of his words; but even then you cannot come to a certain conclusion. Again, you will ask him if his words were directed against strangers or his relations; as people seldom mean real ill to their own relations, wife or children, father or mother. Ask also, what led to such words. If there was great provocation, and he was very angry, there may have been a real evil intention. Nor will it be an excuse to say that it was only for a moment that he wished their realisation, as no more is needed to lead to the commission of a great fault at that mo-

ment. Therefore you must enquire into their number, and take them at least for what they are in God's sight. If there are relapses into this sin, do not give absolution until you see a change, or some decided sign of contrition. Secondly, ask if the penitent has spoken injuriously to his neighbour; and that, in the presence of others. In the latter case he is bound to make reparation before the same persons, unless there are reasons why it is better this should not be, as for instance reminding others of what was said, rekindling bad feelings &c. If the injury was secret, the penitent should ask pardon in private. Bear in mind however that among rough people, injurious words do not always mean ill as they sound. Inquire too whether the penitent has fostered divisions, making mischief by tale-bearing. Further ask, whether he is at enmity with anyone, and if he has refused the ordinary signs of good-will to such persons. It is a question if the injured party is bound to remit the offence. The doctors of Salamanca say that the injured party is bound to remit the offence, but not its public penalty, as that affects the general welfare. As a matter of speculation, this is true; but practically I have never dared to absolve penitents who, while they profess to forgive their enemies, yet insist that justice should have its course, so that the wicked may be punished. I never can persuade myself that these people, who are often steeped in sin, are solely animated with a desire for the public welfare and for justice, apart from all wish to revenge themselves, the rather that they do not apply their rule save to those who offend them. Many doctors say

that their zeal for the public welfare is generally only a cloak for personal vengeance. But I think one may absolve the offended party, if he remits the offence, still claiming a suitable indemnity for the injury done to him, provided the offender be not too poor to furnish such indemnity; or on condition that the offender quits the neighbourhood, either because the offended man has relations who are resentful, or because the oppressor is of so quarrelsome a nature, that there is just cause for fearing that his insolence could not be endured ^d.

Of the 8th
command-
ment.

CLXXIX. Ask the penitent if he has stolen any thing, and from whom? whether from one or several persons; once or several times; for if each time he has taken what constitutes a serious matter, he has sinned mortally each time. If on the other hand, he took but little each time, he only committed mortal sin when his thefts amounted to a serious matter, supposing that such was not his intention from the first.

When you have ascertained that the penitent is bound to make restitution, see whether he can do so at once, though with some difficulty. If so, do not give him absolution until he has made restitution, even if he gives you extraordinary signs of amendment. In truth money is like blood, only to be extracted with much pain and grief; and experience teaches too often that unless restitution be made before absolution, it will be very difficult to enforce it afterwards. Of course I except the case of a penitent whose conscience is so sensitive, that there is no

^d CLXXVIII. is omitted. See notice at the beginning.

reason to doubt his good faith. I say with *some difficulty*, because if he cannot make restitution without *great* difficulty or the loss of his rightful position, he may defer it, unless his creditor be also in great need. Even then probably the debtor is not bound to make restitution while he himself is in serious need, and would be reduced to extremity by such restitution; unless the stolen property "extet in specie," and the creditor's need arises out of this very theft. But when it is advisable to defer restitution, counsel the penitent to restore little by little, to do some work for his creditors, or to seek some other way of advantaging him.

It is not possible to set forth here all that there is to be said on this vast and complicated subject of restitution. I will only indicate some of the most ordinary practical cases. 1) When a man has been stealing in company with others, in order to ascertain whether he is bound to make the whole restitution, you must learn if he was merely led away by his companions, and whether the robbery would have been committed all the same without him? In this case he is only obliged to restore his proportion. Was the theft concerted, all taking full share in it? If so, each is bound "in solidum" to make restitution. But particularly, uneducated people of unsensitive consciences are not easily persuaded that they are obliged to restore what others have taken. It is better to enjoin restitution according to their conscience, without precisely dictating the measure. 2) Observe that no one is bound to repair the mischief done, if he gained no personal advantage from it, did

not foresee it, or has not been sentenced to repair it by law. 3) When the person on whom the theft has been committed, is not definitely known, you will require the penitent to make restitution by means of almsgiving; but if the person defrauded is known, restitution must be made to him. It is amazing to find Confessors so ignorant as to let this be done by alms &c., when the injured person is known. Under such circumstances, I have maintained that the penitent must make a second restitution, because in all cases the robber is bound to indemnify the robbed. But I have granted that if the thefts were small, although, when added up, they amounted to a serious sum, and made from various persons, I would allow restitution to be made through the poor. Supposing any one to have wronged a great number of unknown persons in the same place, through small frauds, such as the sale of wine, oil, &c., I hold him bound to make restitution to those buyers, either by lowering his prices, or increasing his measures, and not through the poor of the place, as is allowed by some. 4) If any one takes or retains another man's goods under the supposition that the owner would willingly give them, if asked, such are not obliged to make restitution. 5) Nor is he who has given to his creditor as a gift what he owed, without having thought about his obligation. 6) Observe that in order to be bound to make restitution "*sub gravi*," if the stolen property is consumed without his becoming any richer, the penitent must have committed a grave interior fault against commutative justice. Moreover the exterior action

or influence on his part must have been the effectual cause of the harm done, and that influence must have been completely or seriously unjust, and he must be morally certain that it was so as regards the reception.

As to retaining other men's goods, if the penitent has for him probable opinion united to legitimate possession, that is to say, is in good faith, the Confessor cannot insist on restitution. Still more if a man has begun with possessing something in good faith, and has diligently sought to discover the truth, he is not obliged to restore anything, unless he is certain that the property in question belongs to another. Or if the obligation to restitution be certain, but the penitent is acting in good faith, and the Confessor foresees that it would be useless to press him, it is better to be silent, so as not to convert a material sin into a formal one to the ruin of his soul. This is the universal opinion of the doctors. Finally restitution in cases of contracts requires much study and examination. Many contracts appear unjust or usurious at first sight, which on closer inspection, are not found to be such.

CLXXX. Ask the penitent if he has injured any person's reputation, imputing to him either a real or a false fault. If the fault is a real one, ask if it was secret or open, where committed, whether known by fame only, or by the sentence of the law; ask whether the thing was said before one or more people, and if it was told as being known to himself, or repeated from hearsay. In the matter of restitution of reputation, the slanderer is bound to contradict himself. If it is true, he should remedy the mis-

Of the 9th
command-
ment.

chief as well as he can, without lying. If it is likely that restitution will do the slandered man more harm than good, because the slander was long ago, and has been forgotten, it is better to take an opportunity of speaking favourably of him, rather than to recal the past by direct reparation. Such reparations should be made before you give absolution if possible; they are harder afterwards, though not so difficult to enforce as restitution of money. Finally remember that to make known what is evil in our neighbour, is strictly speaking slander, and S. Thomas says that it is a sin, when done with the intention of blackening his reputation, but not when it is to avert some evil, as for instance when it is made known to parents, masters or superiors, in order to the correction or hindrance of the guilty person or to prevent mischief to others; except where the certain mischief to the person spoken of is greater than the possible mischief to others.

CLXXXI. We have already spoken of the obligation to restore the injured honour of a neighbour, and of rash judgements. Many imperfectly instructed penitents accuse themselves of rash judgements, and require teaching that 1) if there are sufficient motives for the judgement, it is not rash, but just, and therefore not wrong, 2) that more often parents and masters entertain suspicions than judgements, out of the need to restrain their children from bad society, or their servants from theft. Only warn them not to impart their suspicions to anybody.

There remain only the commandments of the Church, but I have already spoken of the obliga-

tions of Sundays and holy days. As to fasting, I will remind you of three things. 1) That it is not every kind of labour which has a right to dispensation from fasting, only such as demands great bodily fatigue. 2) That workmen are only dispensed on the days they work, or on the day before, if fasting would incapacitate them for work: 3) That it is not enough to eat nothing save at meals, and sup more plentifully than usual, as some people do: fasting implies eating but once in the day, and then only a simple collation of eight or at most ten ounces for those who require more. The poor who would not have enough in the morning and for whom the evening collation would not suffice, are dispensed. It is thus you should examine ignorant penitents. I will speak later of how you should excite them to penance, and how guide yourself in imposing penances^h. But above all do not neglect this examination when it is requisite; it is a point in which the greater number of Confessors fail.

ARTICLE II.

Of the interrogations to be put to persons of divers conditions whose consciences are not sensitive.

CLXXXII. As to the obligations of each one's state and condition of life, it is not always enough for the Confessor to ask generally if the duties thereof have been fulfilled. When you see that the penitent has not a tender conscience, or that you

^h n. 412.

have good reason for believing that he does not fulfil the duties of his condition, you should question him specially, at least concerning his principal duties.

If he be a
Priest.

If the penitent be a priest, ask whether he has said the offices as he is bound to do, and whether he has put off doing so for any length of time : whether he has given himself to commerce, or gambling ; whether he hurries over the service, especially the Holy Communion. The result of hurrying is that the faithful are scandalised, inasmuch as it seems to them, that such priests cannot believe in the Real Presence of the Son of God upon the Altar. It may also be well to ask such a priest whether there is any lack of Confessors in the place where he lives, as in such a case it may be incumbent on him to fit himself to hear confessions, as I have already shewn, and as S. Thomas says ; “ Et ideo posuit ordinem in ea (ecclesia) ut quidam aliis sacramenta traderent ^a.” Therefore it is that priests are called the light of the world, the salt of the earth, God’s coadjutors. The object of their lives is to administer the Sacraments ; how then can it be excusable in a priest to see men living in sin through the want of Confessors, while he deprives the Lord of that service for which he was raised to the Priesthood, through indolence refusing to administer the Sacrament of penance ? God’s menaces to such priests who heed not the salvation of their brethren, are very terrible. “ When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warningthe wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand ^b.” Supposing such a priest to excuse himself on the ground of

^a In suppl. q. 34. r. 1.

^b Ezek. iii. 81.

incapacity and want of skill, let him reflect upon what S. F. de Sales calls the false humility of those who refuse to labour for the salvation of souls under a pretext of incapacity. He goes on to say that it is a mere artifice of self-love and a mock humility which we use as a vain pretext to cover our indolence; that God wills us to use the talents He has committed to us, and he who obeys and uses them gives the best proof of humility. The self-conceited man who trusts in himself does well to undertake nothing; but the humble man is bold because he has no confidence in himself, but solely in God who takes delight in manifesting His Power in our weakness, and thus the humble man may safely undertake whatever he will. If the Priest be a Confessor, ask specially if he has studied sufficiently, and if he continues to study. I have said before, that to be a good Confessor it will not suffice to have studied for a time only. Ask too if he has given absolution to any persons in immediate occasion of sin, or who were backsliding, and shewed no special signs of amendment. If he should unhappily have led any one "ad turpia," ask if he knows that he cannot celebrate, such persons being sentenced to perpetual incapacity.

CLXXXIII. If you are confessing an incumbent, inquire 1) if he duly rebukes such of his parishioners as are living in hatred, or in any impurity of life; 2) if he is careful to exhort all alike to fulfil their duties, without respect of persons; we too often find in missions that people of high rank have neglected plain duties for years, without any warning

Of a Priest
having the
cure of
souls.

from their pastors; 3) if he has himself administered the Sacraments, especially that of penance, to those who were in danger, and whenever it was required; I say himself, because he does not fulfil his duty by causing others to do it, if he can do so himself; 4) if he assists the dying; 5) if he preaches on Sundays, for if without lawful hindrance he goes a month without preaching, or three in different months during the year, theologians say that he incurs a "grave" fault; 6) if he gives alms in proportion to his means; 7) if he is careful to teach the Catechism to the children, and to instruct the ignorant in the essential truths and means of salvation, especially concerning contrition; and if he has prepared the children for Communion when they were fit for it; 8) if he have given ordination-certificates easily and through human respect. In this matter it is not enough to have a negative opinion; they are bound to have a positive belief in the uprightness and fidelity of those they recommended, and to satisfy themselves individually on the point. Ordinates have presented themselves with a certificate from their incumbent of respectability and of frequenting the Sacraments, who all the time are sin-laden, who barely communicate once a year, or have even neglected their Easter Communion. They are ordained, and are the cause of general scandal! But the incumbents who gave them testimonials will have to give account to God for this, for the Bishops have trusted to them. Though in truth the most experienced Bishops do not wholly lean upon incumbents in this weighty matter which so largely affects the good of souls.

CLXXXIV. If you are confessing a Bishop who ^{If he be a Bishop.} gives you reason to think that he does not rightly fulfil his duties, ask 1) If he takes due pains to assure himself of the respectable life as well as of the theological knowledge of his candidates for Ordination, according to the obligation laid on him by the Canons, and by the Apostle S. Paul; not trusting solely to the certificates brought to him; 2) if he admits only priests well proved in doctrine and morals to be confessors, since all others do more harm than good; 3) how he uses his revenues; for when he has provided for his own decent maintenance, a Bishop is bound to give what remains to the poor; 4) whether he keeps his proper residence. A Bishop ought not to absent himself from his Diocese for mere recreation or without a sufficient reason; 5) whether he takes pains to prevent scandals among his flock, even by aid of the law when it is required. Finally ask what he does to set a good example: for assuredly a Bishop ought specially to be a model of holiness.

CLXXXV. If your penitent be a religious, ask if ^{If a Religious.} she has broken her vow of poverty by giving or taking anything without leave; if she has said her office; whether she has any grudge toward any other religious. Question such as hold any office concerning the way they fulfil their charge; for instance ask portresses if they have carried letters, or undertaken any private commissions. Ask Superioresses whether they have allowed any abuses to creep in, which although trivial in themselves, are mortal sins in a Superior, because they lead to injury of souls.

CLXXXVI. Of a judge, ask whether he has ac- ^{If a Judge.}

cepted persons ; if he has heard causes carelessly, or judged by impulse and without fitting study ; whether he has been captious, or partial.

Of a Physician.

Of a physician, inquire 1) If he has a sufficient knowledge and skill to practise, and whether he duly studies difficult cases ; 2) if he has given permission to his patients to eat meat, or allowed them to stay away from Divine service out of human respect and without necessity ; 3) if he has given any dangerous remedy to a patient whose case was not hopeless ; if he has sent his prescriptions to any ignorant or untrustworthy chemist, because of private friendship ; 4) if he has attended properly to the poor, on whose behalf he is paid, or without payment in extreme cases. 5) Especially ask if he takes care that his patients see their priest while yet there is time. How sad it is to see so many sick men, especially in the higher classes, reduced to put the affairs of their soul in order for the first time when the end is near, when they can scarcely speak or hear, much less examine their conscience and conceive true sorrow for sin. And this is often the fault of physicians, who will not give timely warning of danger to the sick man or his relations, but rather go on deceiving them till it is too late. I would have you press this closely upon medical men, warning them that their own salvation and that of others depends upon it. Of surgeons and apothecaries ask if they have given women medicines to make them miscarry ; if they have given a wrong medicine instead of the right one, or sold any for more than they were worth.

Of a merchant.

CLXXXVII. Of a merchant, inquire if he has cheated in weight or measure ; if he has sold at an

unfair price, especially when giving credit to those who were to be trusted and had not hurt him.

CLXXXVIII. Of a tailor, inquire if he has worked Of a tailor. on holy days in order to finish work without any very special reason; if he has fasted, as this kind of labour does not dispense men from fasting; if he has altered prices dishonestly; if he has kept the remains of stuffs intrusted to him.

CLXXXIX. Of an agent, inquire if he has kept Of an agent. back anything received, for himself.

CXC. Persons whose trades lead them to be in dangerous situations, must be very specially dealt with.

ARTICLE III.

CXCI. * Needful as is holiness of life, no Confessor will reap abundant fruits in his ministry without true prudence, which is, so to say, the soul of his sacred occupation. I do not mean a merely worldly prudence which may become unworthy of a Priest, but that spiritual prudence which teaches a man to do all things at the best time and place and in the best manner. Its essentials are circumspection and reserve; its results, wise counsel and judgement. It is won from God, not by study alone, but still more by prayers and tears. How is the Confessor worthily to exercise his triple office of judge, physician and doctor, without true prudence guided by supernatural light? Of course his office as judge does not involve making laws; on the contrary his business is, not to

Practical directions on the duty of questioning.

* B. Leonard. no. 7-25.

break the law. If his penitent is fit for absolution, he looses him ; if not, he leaves him bound ; but inasmuch as the justice dealt in the confessional by confessors has the amendment of the sinner in view, therein differing from ordinary coercive justice, it requires a more than ordinary exercise of prudence. It is the lack of this which is the stumbling-block of many priests. Consider the subject practically. For instance, a hurried, rough Confessor who wants to get through so many confessions as fast as possible, gives his penitent no time to open his conscience, but keeps hurrying him on, perpetually asking, "Is there anything else?" so that perhaps the unlucky penitent leaves out half he has to tell. Again another Confessor no sooner hears something serious or shameful, than he reproves the penitent sharply, and shuts up his heart, before all the poison has been expressed. Others put all manner of merely inquisitive questions, which are idle and useless, thereby exposing themselves to much danger, and disregarding the rules which forbid Confessors to speak in the tribunal of what is immaterial to the confession. But the most blameable of all, is the Confessor who does not assist his penitent to declare the faults which cost him most in the telling. One good Priest told me that he had saved innumerable souls through the help of a single question. When new faces appeared in his confessional, and one thing or another led him to suspect that there was some sin hidden in the depths of the penitent's heart, he used to ask, "When you were a child, did you never conceal some sin? when you were very young perhaps? Speak out, do

not be afraid, I will help and comfort you." By this gentle dealing he often extracted some infernal viper which dragged a whole train of bad confessions after it, thus verifying the words of the Holy Spirit; "*Obstetricante manu ejus, eductus est coluber tortuosus*^b." If you follow this plan when you see it to be desirable, you will do well both to your own and to your penitent's soul.

CXCII. The imprudence with which inexperienced Confessors absolve penitents who are not rightly disposed, is the cause of much evil to souls; but still worse it is, where absolution is given to those who have not been taught the truths essential to know "*necessitate medii*." There is a condemned proposition which says, "*Absolutionis capax est homo quantumvis laboret ignorantia mysteriorum fidei, et etiamsi per negligentiam etiam culpabilem nesciat mysterium sanctissimæ Trinitatis et Incarnationis Domini nostri Jesu Christi*." Perhaps you will say, "Do you expect us to teach the Catechism in the Confessional?" Certainly not; but I do expect you to realise that it is your duty to teach your penitents whatever is necessary to absolution, and this involves the principal mysteries of religion; consequently, when any untaught ignorant persons come to you, you should receive them kindly, cause them to make the sign of the Cross, and teach them to ask grace of God to confess rightly; teach them to strike the breast, and thus or by some other external act, to ask God's forgiveness; and then question them concerning the mysteries of the

^b Job xxvi. 13. The English version gives rather a different meaning.

Faith, of which such people are often very ignorant. If the penitent is ignorant concerning the great Verities, such as the Unity of God in Trinity, the Incarnation, the rewards and punishments of the next life, he is incapable of receiving absolution until he knows enough at least to make an act of faith, i. e. till he knows of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, One, not three Gods; that the Second Person became Man, and is Jesus Christ; and that, though He be God and Man, there are not two Christs, and that there is a Righteous God Who sends the good to Paradise, and the evil to hell. It is a bad plan to send such ignorant people to be taught by others: the only result is that they will remain in their ignorance. Better were it for you to teach them briefly, making them repeat acts of faith, love and contrition; and desire them to go to their parish priests to learn more of all that is "*de necessitate præcepti*." This does not really take as much time as you would suppose at first sight. Afterwards you will teach them to confess the carelessness which has hindered them from learning these truths, and then you can grant them absolution. It is not uncommon however, to find as great ignorance in people of a higher rank and better education; people who would be very much humiliated by being questioned concerning these mysteries. In order then to satisfy myself on this essential point, and also because such people, who are wholly addicted to the world and vanity, have rarely the habit of making the proper acts of faith &c., I gently suggest that the best way to gain the fruits of the Sacrament is to repeat acts of faith, hope, love and contrition, and I

invite them to say those acts with me, following heartily the words I repeat, "I believe, O my God, because Thou who art Truth itself, hast revealed it to Thy Holy Church, that Thou art One God in Three Co-equal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; I believe that God the Son became Man, and died upon the Cross for us, that He rose again, and ascended into Heaven, whence He will come to judge all men, sending the good to Paradise and the bad into Hell. This you believe with all your heart?" "Yes, Father." Then the act of Hope, "I hope, O my God, because Thou art infinitely merciful and all-powerful, that Thou wilt forgive me all my sins, and grant me everlasting glory in the life to come, through the Merits of Jesus Christ, and the good works I may do through Thy Grace." "You do heartily hope that so Good a God will forgive your sins, do you not?" "Yes, Father." Then the Act of Love, "Oh, my God, Who art the Sovereign Good, I love Thee above all things, and for Thy sake I would love my neighbour as myself." "You do sincerely and heartily love this good God, do you not?" "Yes, Father." After these acts, the penitent will be much more prepared to make the act of contrition. "Ask pardon for all your sins of God, and filled with sincere sorrow for them say, humbly striking your breast: 'O my Saviour Jesus, I repent that I have offended Thee, because Thou art the Sovereign Good, and I will strive never to offend Thee more.'" I teach all my penitents to make this act twice, once before I give them their penance; and again directly before they receive absolution. I do not say that it is

necessary to do the same with everybody, but certainly in the case of those who are careless and full of distractions, it is very useful for the Confessor to make them make these acts, especially in general Confessions. He will be better satisfied himself, as, of all the Sacraments, penance is that in which validity depends much more upon the acts of the penitent who receives, than of the Confessor who administers it. So then the prudence of the priest in this precious Sacrament consists essentially in satisfying himself as far as possible of the interior disposition of his penitents, through such acts; so that fed by the food of prudence, they may attain eternal salvation.

S. Charles
on the
duty of
question-
ing.

CXCIII. ^a In the case of common ignorant people, and those who confess but rarely, the Confessor should put certain questions before entering upon the confession, in order that he may know better how to proceed. In the case of a person unknown to him, he should inquire what is his state of life, profession &c; how long it is since his last confession, setting forth the great benefit of frequent confession; whether he fulfilled his penance; whether he knows the Articles of the Faith, and the commandments of God; and whether he has diligently examined his conscience, as is fitting before approaching this great Sacrament. If necessary, the Confessor will teach the penitent how to examine his conscience, so as to recal all his sins and their circumstances, going through his whole life, first dividing it by age, childhood, youth &c. then by his various conditions, before and since marriage &c.

^a S. Charles. 24-35.

then by circumstances, such as prosperity, adversity, health or sickness, employments, society, places, &c. examining under each head wherein he sinned, in thought, word or deed. He should also teach the necessary conditions which are involved in a good Confession, putting them as briefly and simply as possible, reducing to some four or five chief, the sixteen which the Doctors comprised in these lines :

“Sit simplex, humilis Confessio, pura, fidelis
Atque frequens, nuda et discreta, libens, verecunda,
Integra, secreta et lacrymabilis, accelerata,
Fortis et accusans, et sit parere parata.”

CXCIV. The Confessor will inquire concerning previous confessions, so as to be sure if there is anything that ought to be repeated ; or if the penitent has intentionally suppressed any mortal sin, or divided it, telling part to one confessor, and part to another ; if he has confessed himself without true sorrow for sin, intention of amendment, or effort to that end. And inasmuch as many people are very careless in their confessions, and make them more by habit than through an earnest desire for their soul's health, it is well that Confessors should urge people according to their circumstances to make a good general confession, so that, reviewing their whole past life, they may turn to God with renewed earnestness, and make amends for the deficiencies of past confessions.

CXCV. Next the Confessor should move the penitent to accuse himself of all the sins which he remembers, after which he will probably find it advisable to question him, so as to recal to his mind things forgotten or confusedly told, always requiring the number of any mortal sins, either exactly or nearly.

On the
matter of
questions.

It is well to do this by means of the Commandments, the seven capital sins, the five senses, the precepts of the Church, and the works of Mercy. The Confessor must go to work prudently, examining his penitent as to the sins he is most likely to commit, and being especially cautious in all that concerns sins of impurity, concerning which he will ask nothing beyond the kind of sin, and any notably aggravating circumstances. He must know to this end, what circumstances change the kind or aggravate it; "Quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando."

On prudence in questioning.

CXCVI. He will be very cautious in regard to women and children, not to teach them what they do not know, and should always avoid the use of words which can offend the ear, as well as any gestures or looks which might alarm the penitent, and lead him to conceal anything, encouraging him, on the contrary, to accuse himself freely, however grievous his sins may be.

Advice of S. F. de Sales.

CXCVII^a. First of all ascertain the condition of the penitent, and proceed according to that. Then you must ascertain if he means to accuse himself of all his faults, to hate and forsake sin, and to do whatever he is enjoined for his soul's health; if not, you must pause and seek so to dispose him; if you cannot succeed, you must dismiss him, after setting before him the danger of his state. It is a great abuse when sinners will not accuse themselves of anything, without being interrogated. You must teach them to accuse themselves as far as they are able, and then assist them with questions. It is not enough for a penitent to accuse himself as to the kind of his

^a S. F. de Sales, t. ii. 624, 625.

sins, he must specify the character also. Thus a theft in Church is worse than ordinary theft, as being sacrilege also. He must also specify the number of each sin, or at least as nearly as he can, or the length of time during which he has yielded to it; for there is a wide difference between one who is guilty of a single blasphemy, and the habitual blasphemer. Further, examine into the degree of sin; e. g. there is a great difference between being angry, speaking harshly, striking with the hand, or with a sword; as between impure looks and actions. One bad example may give scandal to one person, and another to thirty or forty people.

It is necessary to go still farther, and to examine the penitent concerning his purely interior will and desires; for evil affections are sin. One should go on to cut short evil thoughts, before they are followed by the will or desire. Thus, if any one has taken pleasure in thinking of the death, ruin, or misfortune of his enemy, although he may not desire them, still if he has voluntarily taken pleasure in such thoughts, he has sinned against charity, and ought to accuse himself rigorously of them. It is the same with impure thoughts or imprecations, which should be confessed, because, though he has not sinned with his body, he has sinned with his heart and soul; and sin lies far more in the heart than in the body, whereas we have no right voluntarily to take unlawful pleasure through either; I say, voluntarily, because the evil thoughts which come over us against our will, or without our immediate apprehension, are not sin. Moreover the penitent must accuse himself of

other men's sins, after the example of David; for if by bad example or otherwise, he has provoked anyone to sin, he is guilty of that sin, which is the true meaning of scandal. On the other hand, you must hinder the penitent, as far as possible, from naming or indicating his companions in sin.

CHAPTER V.

Treatment of different kinds of Penitents.

CXCVIII^a. Having ascertained the state of your penitent's soul, it remains to counsel him and do what you can for the good of his soul. You will require great discretion in judging whether to bind or loose him. The lax confessor absolves all who come to him; the severe confessor scarcely any. One is too full of compassion for the guilty, and does not duly weigh their faults; the other is too full of hatred for the faults, and has not pity enough for the sinners. Thus the treatment of one is all soothing oil, that of the other all strengthening wine. Do you follow the good Samaritan and mingle oil and wine. Be filled with compassion for the sinner, as beseems a father: it is the true Spirit of Jesus Christ; the touchstone which distinguished His zeal from that of the Pharisees. But be sure that you really do detest vice; for that is essential to the welfare of sinners, and the tenderest charity knows how to unite vigorous remedies to gentleness and compassion; so that while humbling himself in deep compunction, your penitent

General
directions.

^a Prêtre Sanctifié. No. 63-67.

will not be discouraged or irritated, but on the contrary, he will be drawn to the Sacrament and put confidence in it as well as in you who administer it. S. Augustin says, "Confessio est, per quam morbus latens spe veniæ aperitur."

Discrimination in deciding about contrition.

CXCIX. The over-indulgent Confessor, who readily believes repentance to be real, confounds a disposition to will with true will. The rigorous Confessor does not readily believe in true contrition, because he confounds an efficacious will with a *very* efficacious will; a true and sufficient will, which is common and ordinary, with a full and extraordinary will, which is singular and heroic. Avoid these extremes. True contrition is not so easy a thing as to be ordinarily excited without some prayer, or without some reflection upon the motives which faith sets before us; but it ceases to be a very difficult matter to those who do pray and reflect; in short, God gives men grace to attain it. We must admire the justice of God which requires the sinner to humble himself, and His mercy which grants the sinner's prayer. Unlike the lax Confessor, do not you accept as satisfactory, a will which produces little or no result in the shape of seeking to correct and diminish ordinary faults. But accept that as genuine which produces a definite result in a given time, although it may not do all that is wished, or last always. Do not exact such an extraordinary and heroic will as alone can produce perfect, entire, unalterable and lasting change, would that all sinners had such—all should seek it and wish for it, but it is not necessary to a true conversion and justification; for that an effectual repentance, which is ordinary and humble, will suffice,

although it be inferior to that remarkable contrition which transforms a sinner into a hero of penitence.

CC. The lax Confessor is content to absolve the sinner upon his assertion of penitence, without examining if it be genuine. The rigorist is not satisfied with having no reason to doubt the penitent's word, and requires positive proof. Because the penitent has sinned in the past and may sin again, he thinks it right to put him under long trial. I advise you, before trusting entirely to the sinner's protestations, to see whether there is any cause to doubt the sufficiency of his intention. If there be such, then help him to attain a better disposition; and if your efforts are unavailing, defer absolution. This is what the Roman Catechism teaches: "*Si audita confessione judicaverit neque in enumerandis peccatis diligentiam, nec in detestandis dolorem omnino defuisse, absolvi poterit.*" You must seek such a moral certainty, which ought to satisfy you in administering the Sacrament, since according to the Angelic Doctor, "*Certitudo non est similiter quærenda in omnibus, sed in unâquâque materiâ secundum proprium modum. Quia vero materia prudentiæ sunt singularia contingentia, circa quæ sunt operationes humanæ, non potest certitudo prudentiæ tantæ esse, quo omnino sollicitudo tollatur.*" Elsewhere speaking of the certainty a director of souls ought to have concerning his penitents, having said that as to the outer state he ought not to rest satisfied with his penitent's affirmation, but go deeper to ascertain the truth, he goes on to say that it is quite otherwise as to the interior state: "*Alio modo per confessionis manifestationem, et quantum ad hanc*

cognitionem non potest majorem certitudinem accipere, quam ut subdito credat, quia hoc est ad subveniendum conscientię ipsius, unde in foro conscientię creditur homini et pro se et contra *, &c.” So, inasmuch as no one is more interested than the penitent himself in the truth of his confession, if you have no good reason to doubt his sincerity when he tells you that he is moved to penitence, and that he is resolved to correct himself, and ready to submit to the remedies and the penance you impose; you have as much certainty as an exact, but discreet Confessor need desire.

Two dangers to be avoided.

CCI. One priest is absorbed by dread lest he should dishearten the rejected penitent, and thinks only of the immense harm done to souls by hindering them from the Sacraments. The other can see nothing but the veneration due to the Sacraments, and while dwelling upon the fear of profaning that, he overlooks the risks which attend a rejection of the penitent. Do you avoid both dangers, comforting your penitents and winning them to seek help in confession, while you lose nothing of the respect due to the Sacrament.

How a discreet Confessor should act towards the young.

CCII. In the case of children from seven to ten or twelve, a lax Confessor will treat them as he would grown-up people who were guilty of the same faults, without taking the trouble to supply the lack of right dispositions which are natural to the ignorance and weakness of childhood. The rigorist on principle dismisses them all with a blessing only, because he considers them incapable of the sublime and perfect repentance which he regards as essential to ab-

* Suppl. q. 8. a. 5. ad 2.

solution. I would have you give them very special help, but believe that they are quite capable of a sincere repentance, although it may not be anything extraordinary. The Council of Trent says; "*Si quis negaverit omnes et singulos fideles utriusque sexus, cum ad annos discretionis pervenerint, teneri singulis annis, saltem in paschate, ad communicandum iuxta præceptum sanctæ matris ecclesiæ, anathema sit.*"^d And elsewhere it decides that none are exempt from these obligations, save "*parvulos usu rationis carentes.*"^e You need not fear to apply this precept in its proportion to confession, and absolve them with great benefit to their souls, all the more as the ordinary and right custom among the faithful is, to bring children to confession from the time they are seven years old; and it is a great negligence in parents to omit doing so; inasmuch as true and sufficient contrition is the work of grace, which abounds most where there is no malice, and where baptismal innocence yet lingers. Thus a good confession is more easily made by a soul which, though but partially enlightened, has an upright and flexible will, than by one who, together with greater light, has a perverse and obstinate will. For this reason many adults are less satisfied with their actual confessions, than with those they used to make in the time of their innocence, from which they came forth full of compunction and consolation. But still you must seek to supply what is wanting in them, helping them to examine themselves and to repent, by suggesting motives of contrition that are suitable to their age. If, when this is done, they seem serious,

^d Sess. 13. c. 9. ^e Sess. 21. c. 4.

and give signs of intelligence and devotion, do not deprive them of the great blessing of absolution; but if they are inattentive and thoughtless, only give them your benediction. Anyhow suggest good thoughts to them, that so they may go away with a devout feeling, and the groundwork of respect and love of confession; and be sure that their Angels will not forget your work of love; for it is most important that the soul should begin early to conceive horror for what is evil, and a real love of piety.

CCIII^f. You must treat children with the utmost gentleness and love. Inquire first if they know the chief verities of the Faith, and if not, instruct them patiently yourself, or send them to those who will teach them at least what is necessary to salvation. In their confession begin by making them tell all the faults they remember. You can then ask them, 1) If they have kept back anything through shame; 2) If they have taken God's Holy Name in vain, or said what was not true; 3) If they have missed going to Church, or have worked on Sundays and holy days; 4) If they have disobeyed their parents, or shown any signs of disrespect to them, said unbecoming things to or of them, or laughed at them. 5) If they have [always acted, as knowing that their bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. This will probably suffice. In any case] use the greatest reserve in your questions, beginning with indirect or even vague questions; always remember that it is better that there should be some deficiency in the material integrity of the Confession, than that you should teach them

^f S. Liguori. 86, 87.

anything they do not know, or make them curious to know it. 6) Ask if they have pilfered, or done any mischief to other people's property, 7) if they have spoken ill of any one. You must use them to make an act of contrition suitable to their age, as, "you love God Who is so great so good a Master, Who created you, Who died for you &c; and this God you have offended! He wishes to forgive you; trust that, for the Blood of Jesus Christ, He will forgive you. But you must repent. Well then. You *do* repent for having offended Him &c. Do you know, that for the sins whereby you outraged Him, you have deserved Hell? Are you sorry for having so treated Him? Never again &c." Give them as light a penance as possible, urging them to fulfil it at once, for fear they should forget or omit it.

CCVI^h. S. Philip Neri believed that most men carried the stain of their youthful vices even to the grave; and accordingly he took special pains in winning young men back to God, or in helping them to preserve their innocenceⁱ. He neglected nothing to gain their friendship, delighted in receiving them; he talked with them about those things which interested them most; he walked with them and set them to play at suitable games. The Saint has been seen to start their game, and then retire a little way to read and meditate. If some of these youths did not return

S. Philip's
method of
averting
sin.

^h Vie de S. Ph. Neri. L. II. c. 7.

ⁱ Whenever, in the educated classes, men have had any thing to confess against the viith commandment, the evil was learned at the first or second school, at about 7 or 12, and was hardly ever (with some 3 or 4 exceptions) self-originated. Ed.

to confession, he would use every means to recall them to their duties, warning them, praying and causing others to pray, that they might be restored to their first earnestness. When they were won back again, he took the greatest care of them, and would commend them to some of his steady and good penitents, who could look after them, and keep them from evil associates. His patience was indefatigable. One day a Roman nobleman who often visited S. Philip, heard the youths whom the Saint had collected round him make such a noise, that he could not help expressing his astonishment. How, he asked the Saint, can you endure such a tumult? "So long as they do not offend God, they are welcome to chop wood on my back!" answered the venerable man, laughing. Such goodness could not fail to win the hearts of these youths, and he possessed their entire confidence. A man of high rank who had often gone to the good Father in his youth, said once with tears, "When I was young and I confessed to Father Philip, I never was guilty of mortal sin; but alas! I had no sooner left him, than I fell into the licentious life I have led ever since!"

S. Philip wished young men to make frequent confession, but he tried to make them humble before admitting them to frequent Communion. His experience in direction taught him that Satan redoubles his snares and temptations on Communion-days; and he used to warn his disciples of it, urging them to come to the Holy Table with an ardent longing. To those who asked permission to communicate, he used

to say, "Sitientes, sitientes, venite ad aquas;" and in order to excite this wholesome thirst, he wished them to give him notice four or five days before their Communion. Afterwards, he made them use certain special exercises for several days, such as repeating some prayers with outstretched arms; or the like. In order to avoid the risk of impurity, he taught them not to remain alone after their meals, not to begin reading or writing directly, but to stay and talk with others.

ARTICLE I.

TREATMENT OF ADULTS.

With respect to those who are considering the choice of a vocation.

CCVII^a. It does not rest with the Confessor to decide upon the profession a young person is to adopt in life, but you must be guided in advising them as to what they may think God calls them to follow, by the signs of vocation you find in them. If they are inclined to the religious life, ascertain what Order they propose to join, for as a general rule they had better remain in the world than join a relaxed Order; they will soon follow the example set them, and give up what little good they did before. Otherwise examine into your penitent's vocation; whether there is any hindrance, weak health, lack of intelligence &c. Above all, see if the intentions are good, such as a close union with God, reparation for the evil of the past life, or shelter from the world's perils. If the principal object is worldly, such as to lead a quiet life, escape from a trying condition &c., do not let such an one go on, he has no true vocation, and will not do well. But if the object is good, and there is no rightful hindrance, then, as S. Thomas says, neither you, or anybody whatsoever can thwart the vocation without mortal sin. At the same time it may be well to delay

^a S. Liguori. No. 88-91.

the fulfilment of his wishes, so as to prove him, especially if you know him to be of an inconstant mind, or if his resolution was formed during a Retreat or a Mission; for under such circumstances people often make great resolutions which fade away when the cause of excitement has passed.

CCVIII. If a young man desires to take Holy Orders, do not consent until you have tried him long and severely with respect to science, capacity, and intention. Secular Priests have as many, nay more obligations than Religious, and moreover they are placed in the midst of the world's perils. In order to be a good Secular Priest, (a rare, not to say a very rare thing) a man should have led a regular life, apart from pleasure, idleness, bad associates, and greatly given to prayer and the Sacraments; but "*quis est hic, et laudabimus eum?*" Otherwise he puts himself in great peril of damnation, especially if he seeks Holy Orders in consequence of his family's wishes, and with a view to their advancement or support. We have already said that parents who compel their children to become Priests or Religious are guilty of a great sin.

With respect to young women who wish to consecrate themselves to the Lord, do not allow them to make a vow of perpetual chastity unless they are well rooted in virtue, trained to the spiritual life, and especially given to prayer. As a beginning, you can allow them to take the vow for a fixed time, as from one holy season to another.

CCIX. As to young men who ought to marry (and there are some who for their soul's health ought to do so) they are blameable if they marry to the

dishonour of their family, just as parents who interfere to prevent a rightful marriage are blameable. The Confessor should strive to hinder such, or even in a case of a marriage which, though in no way dishonourable, was the cause of distress and scandal to parents.

CCX ^b. The severe Confessor treats virtuous adults who are habitually free from mortal sin, but guilty of many lighter faults, as he treats children. He does not absolve them, because he says that they do not repent of any of these faults and do not amend ; but if they fall into a mortal sin, he is eager to absolve them, as if the malice, which occasions them to commit a grave fault, facilitated the repentance for any more considerable failures. On the other hand, the relaxed confessor absolves all these penitents without any difficulty, saying, that in truth they are always the same faults, but that they are not deadly sins. Do *you* give them absolution, but with discretion. With discretion ; for there is too much reason to fear, that they come to the sacrament out of habit, and make it null or sacrilegious, if, being guilty of grave negligence, or perceiving that they have no true contrition, they approach it without the dispositions necessary. Yet give them absolution ; for you have an easy and ready means of securing, as much as possible, the validity and benefit of the sacrament ; and you should hold it an invariable rule, never to deprive a soul of the great benefit of absolution, except as matter of necessity or for its great benefit. But here there is no necessity, since the remedy is in your own hands. It is, to recommend these peni-

^b Prêtre sanctifié n. 48-77.

tents to be careful, before every confession, to pray and humble themselves, that they may thoroughly repent of every thing, and to direct their contrition and firm purpose to some particular sin, present or past, grave or more notable, among the venial voluntary sins, because it is easier for them to conceive the repentance necessary and effectual, to secure the validity of the sacrament, at least as to this sin. They ought, at the close of the confession, to specify this sin; as some great murmur, or, in general, e. g. notable sins against charity, purity &c.; for it is not necessary to explain further, if all has been already confessed. This is the line to take, 1) with persons, whose actual venial sins are inconsiderable, still more in regard to malice, than to the matter; sins done, rather than conceived; the sins of an instant, and of which consequently the malice does not last; such as, e. g. little curiosities and vanities, or slight impatience; 2) with people whose venial sins are small with respect to the matter, but great or notable with respect to malice, as for instance, an officious lie, studied and prepared; a slight but lasting impatience. In fact the will displays greater malice in its reiterated resistance to the sting of remorse which conscience will experience during such a prolonged interval. It is desirable to be watchful with respect to persons who perpetually relapse into the same venial faults, and to warn them that if they continue to shew no effectual repentance or amendment, they cannot receive absolution. You may threaten to withhold it, in order to rouse them if you think they can bear this remedy; but if you fear discouraging and distressing them, you can yet se-

cure the validity of the Sacrament by making them confess some present or past fault, for which they feel a true repentance, always supposing that you have no reason to fear that such faults be a yet existing bad habit.

Of those
who are
guilty of
grave
sins.

CCXI. Would that directors who hold these extreme views would make themselves useful where the greatest need is felt! I mean with respect to penitents who are guilty of grave faults. But it is precisely here, that one absolves too easily, and the other with too much difficulty, so that neither wholly promotes God's glory and the good of souls. Make it your rule to require signs of a satisfactory disposition in your penitent, so that you may form a solid and prudent judgement as to his present contrition, and his effectual and sincere resolutions, though they may be simple and ordinary. When you can form such a judgement as this, you may and ought to absolve him, except where it is manifestly for his greater good to withhold absolution; because when he has satisfied all that can be asked of him, both as to accusation and sorrow, he has a right to the fruits of the Sacrament. If you have not sufficient proof to form such a judgement, you cannot absolve him while things remain in that state.

Three
things
to be
observed
in defer-
ring abso-
lution.

CCXII. But this is the time when in your united character of father, physician and judge, you ought to consider whether the postponement of absolution will be "in ædificationem" or "in destructionem," "in salutem" or "in ruinam," of your penitent. If you believe that it will be "in salutem," because he can easily return to you after a

short interval, delay his absolution. It is the best way to assure the validity of the Sacrament, and to ensure the good of the penitent, who requires strong wine to purge out the poison of vice. Nevertheless unite to that the profitable softness of oil, such as I am about to point out. 1st. Soften the delay by pointing out to the penitent, that it is pain to you to inflict it, but that your own duty and his welfare require it; that, were you now to give him absolution, he would not receive the satisfaction or consolation which he will receive at a later period. 2nd. Teach him to prepare better, pointing out such prayers and good works as are suitable to his wants, and arm him with precautions against falling again; if he requires to make a general confession, give him the short easy method already mentioned (No. 31.) 3rd. Fix a day for him to return, a week or ten days hence, and bid him not to delay coming, even if he should fall into sin again during the interval: tell him, that on the contrary, he would need his physician's help all the more, and that you will do your utmost for him. Thus he will leave you neither disheartened nor cast down, but well-taught to make ready for the coming blessing of Absolution and reconciliation with God.

CCXIII. If you foresee that to delay absolution is very undesirable, and that it may be "in ruinam et destructionem;" then either rigorism or laxity might be convenient to you, but would be fatal to your penitent. A lax confessor gets rid of all further trouble by believing his penitent's protestations of regret, and absolves him. He at least gives some penance which may be profitable, or sug-

gests some good thought which, though it will not convert the penitent, may help him to keep from falling so frequently. But the rigorist, who is decided as to not administering the Sacrament, does not take the trouble to give advice or remedies, and contents himself with saying briefly, "I cannot absolve you; go, prepare yourself better and come again in a fortnight or a month." Who can say how much harm may be done by such treatment?

Of those
who have
need of
speedy
absolu-
tion.

CCXIV. If you have persons, full of faults but who have need of speedy or instant absolution, as e. g. if they are to be married on a certain day, or must set off on a journey, it has least peril to absolve them. Hope then in God, but set yourself to plant and water good feelings in their hearts, and hope that God will give you the increase.

CCXVI. 1) Ask the help of God with your whole heart: 2) conceal your embarrassment from the penitent; hide it, and offer it to God: 3) excite in yourself compassion for the sick person: 4) as a skilful physician, who, in a disease wherein delay is perilous, uses prompter and more effectual remedies than in a less pressing illness, make up by your fervour for the want of time, and begin by turning to your advantage the circumstances which are against you: speak to the penitent somewhat thus: "O how well you have done to confess, at least to-day! Now, more than ever, you ought to be anxious to do it well! What a blessing to enter upon marriage, travel &c. with the blessing of God! On the other hand, what good could you expect without God? What peril for soul and body if you remain in a state of sin! Take courage; say all:

I will help you." Thus you would begin by securing the completeness of the confession. When it is finished, add: "Now what is of most moment, is contrition; hope for it with confidence: for not in vain has God waited for you and brought you to this reconciliation. True, you have need of extraordinary grace; and you have made yourself unworthy of it by your delay, and perhaps by your ill-intent in only coming to-day; but be not discouraged: there is yet time. Still, to appease God and obtain His help, you must do all you can. You would, to save the life of your body, if you fell into a stream; what ought you not to do for your soul? My son, Jesus is very ready to receive sinners. I give you an hour. Go cast yourself at His Feet and think what you would do, to obtain the grace of sincere repentance. Be in earnest with yourself; think on and reproach yourself for the enormity of your faults and the outrage you have offered to God, in delaying till now; make many acts of contrition, then come back and I will soon finish with you, and will comfort you."

CCXVII. To make more sure of his repentance, when he returns, ask him what he has promised, and how he has employed his time. You will find, I hope, that he has done more good in this hour, than in a week before; for you have shewn him the importance of contrition, and also how to excite it, and you have encouraged him by the promise of a speedy absolution. Mostly, you will find him quite different from what he was; no longer insensible and bold, but contrite, humbled, docile and ready to receive any kind of penance. To assure yourself

the better of his good will, you can give him a somewhat strong penance, yet not such as to frighten him, and if he accepts it, do you, as a discreet confessor, diminish it instantly. His readiness in accepting it has gained what you wanted, to ascertain his good will. Now he is well disposed. You will absolve him then, and God, Who by your care has recovered His wandering son, will know how to repay it. If you still have some doubt, have recourse to prayer with the penitent. Pray fervently, and hope with confidence, that our Lord will fulfil His promise, 'When two or three are gathered together in His Name to pray, He is in the midst of them' to hear them. In this way, you can absolve and console him without laxity. If, notwithstanding all this, you have some disquiet, yet not with definite grounds or considerable, but slight, remember S. Chrysostome's saying, that it is better to have to give account for over-mercifulness than for over-rigorousness, and S. Paul's, "I myself could be anathema from Christ for my brethren." But fear not. You will not be guilty before God, if you can say to Him these three things; 1) "Lord, Thou knowest, why I do not send them away, but absolve them: it is to preserve this soul from numerous faults, and to save many outrages to Thee: 2) Thou knowest how I have acted; I have omitted neither prayers nor pains: 3) In this Sacrament, Thou didst make me a minister of Thy love; and if of Thy justice also, still of that fatherly justice which would not the death but the amendment and salvation of the ungodly." Fear nothing; be of good confidence: God will own you as His faithful minister.

CCXX°. If there is no need to give immediate absolution, bear in mind that Confessors ought not to admit those persons to confession who come without a requisite exterior and interior preparation; and they must charitably exhort such persons to go away and duly prepare themselves. Confessors should not receive women who are excessively or otherwise indecorously dressed. But especially they must examine into the mental preparation, i. e. whether the penitent has made an exact and diligent self-examination, accompanied by a proportionate sorrow for sin, a firm resolution of satisfaction for the past and of amendment for the future. The signs that such preparation is wanting, are, when people come direct to confession from some temporal occupation without giving any time to prayer; when they have no knowledge of their sins; when the Confessor knows that they continue in their unlawful ways, or they persevere in some manifest occasion which leads to such sin, without any intention of avoiding it; or when they might restore another man's goods, and do not. But if the Confessor sees that his penitents have taken some pains to prepare rightly for Confession, and yet that, through incapacity or some other reason, they do not appear to have the necessary dispositions; he must seek to supply what is wanting, striving to excite them to contrition, setting before them the grievousness of their sins, the punishment due to such, as being committed against God, and the great risk of eternal damnation, ensuing upon them, that so they may at least obtain such real sorrow of heart for all and

Of those who present themselves without the required disposition.

° S. Charles, pp. 18-22, 35-43.

each of their mortal sins as to make them fit to receive absolution. The Confessor must take care to give all such instruction as to the right dispositions and method of Confession to such penitents as require it, specially impressing on them the necessity of a full and entire acknowledgement of their faults^d.

Of heads
of fami-
lies who
neglect
their
duties

CCXXII. If the Confessor finds heads of families who have neglected to teach their children and servants, or to enforce observance of God's commandments and the precepts of the Church, or worse still, who hinder such observance, he must require a promise that such neglect shall be remedied before he ought to give absolution. And if they promise repeatedly, but defer fulfilling their promise, he should defer absolution until they give satisfactory proof of amendment.

CCXXIII. The Confessor must do the like with respect to persons who are guilty of mortal sin in pomp and superfluous ornament. And forasmuch as extravagance of dress has reached its climax in the present day, which has partly arisen from the negligence of Confessors, who give absolution irrespectively of it, perhaps without pointing out to their penitents that it is a sin, I will point out how Confessors should deal with it. All those who use extravagant dress to promote deadly sin, are guilty of the same; or who transgress or cause others to transgress God's commandment by working on holy-days; or by spending more money than they, their

^d The subject of ccxxi, the hindrances to absolution from ignorance in matters of faith &c. is treated more fully above n. clxx-clxxii.

husbands or parents can afford, whence divisions in families arise, and unlawful and dishonest acts are committed.

CCXXIV. And as it is not possible but that any who spend more than they can afford, must know that such sins are the result, it may generally be concluded that they are in a state of mortal sin, unless on special investigation the Confessor finds ground for believing otherwise. Again, if a person does not spend more than she can afford, yet if her dress is of an indecent character, or, without being intentionally such, if it is suggestive to others of indecency or may excite thoughts of sin in them, it is mortal sin. Confessors must be cautious not to give absolution either to those who have no real and firm resolution of forsaking mortal sin, or to those who, although they profess such resolution, will not confirm it by accepting the remedies which he may consider necessary to avert fresh sin^e.

Of other penitents who lack suitable dispositions.

CCXXVI^f. When the Confessor has thoroughly sifted his penitent's conscience, he must guide him in such things as seem necessary to render him capable of receiving God's grace, whether in restitution of other men's property, reparation of wrongs and slanders, the amendment of his life, or avoiding occasions of sin. In the case of restitution and reparation, it is desirable to find a way of doing it secretly, so as not to disgrace the penitent; in the case of fraud, for instance, to restore an equivalent without saying from whom. In the case of imposture or false accusation, the penitent should give a

^e Major excommunication not being in use, No. ccxxv is omitted.

^f S. François de Sales p. 226.

contrary impression to those whom he has deceived, without specifying the reason. But as to usuries, unjust lawsuits, and similar entanglements, which require the utmost prudence, if the Confessor is not prepared to advise, he should take time to reflect, and consult those learned in such matters, only taking good care that nothing he says should by any possibility indicate the penitent, unless by the penitent's own special permission. Nor should he act even upon that permission, except under great necessity, and if the penitent asks him to do so after and apart from his Confession.

ARTICLE II.

Treatment of difficult cases.

CCXXXIII. Theologians give many rules for the treatment of scrupulous persons, but it is certain that after prayer, the best and only remedy is obedience to the Confessor. Seek then especially to inculcate two fundamental maxims upon all the scrupulous: I. To go on securely before God in obedience to his spiritual father, where there is no evident sin. It is not man, but God whom he obeys. "Qui vos audit, me audit." This is the doctrine of all theologians and all the masters of the spiritual life, confirmed by the authority of S. Bernard, S. Antony, S. F. de Sales, S. Philip Neri, S. Theresa, S. John of the Cross, S. Ignatius Loyola, the B. Denis the Carthusian, the B. Humbert, the venerable Avila, Gerson &c. II. That the chief scruple should be about not obeying, whereby the scrupulous man runs the risk of losing peace, devotion and zeal for his spiritual progress, and may even further risk his brain, his health and his soul. Scruples may bring him, as they have brought others, to destroy himself, or to plunge into a torrent of vice. Moreover, try to make the scrupulous realise, that one cannot attempt to reckon ledger-wise with God (*la plume à la main*). It is His will, with a view to our greater good, that we

Of the
scrupulous.

should live in uncertainty as to our salvation, and so, when we are doing all that is morally possible not to offend Him, we ought to trust ourselves to His mercy, and while acknowledging that we cannot be saved without His grace and mercy, we ought always to ask that grace tranquilly, trustingly, and perseveringly. "The best way," says S. Francis de Sales, "is, to give ourselves up blindfold to the guidance of God's providence, amid the perplexities and darkness of this life, content to know through one's spiritual father that one is going on aright, without wanting to see it oneself. No one was ever lost through obedience." And S. Philip Neri used to say that "he who obeyed his Confessor was sure not to be called to account for his actions by God." S. John of the Cross says that "not to be at rest concerning what one's Confessor says, is pride and want of faith."

Of the
scrupu-
lous who
suffer
from evil
thoughts.

CCXXXIV. Further, 1) dwell often with the scrupulous upon the great confidence we ought to have in our Lord Jesus Christ Who died to save us, exhorting him to go on peacefully, so long as he has recourse to Jesus. 2) Forbid him to read books which are calculated to excite scruples, or to talk with scrupulous persons. If he is exceedingly troubled, go so far as to forbid him to hear sermons upon alarming truths, or to examine his conscience upon subjects which arouse unfounded scruples. 3) If his scruple lies in a fear of consenting to evil thoughts, as for instance against the faith, purity or charity, you, his confessor, ought to deal freely and boldly with such troubles, and tell him that these thoughts are temptations and torments, but that there is no consent and consequently no sin therein. In this case

especially you ought to remember that great rule given by the doctors, i. e. that when the penitent fears God, "*persona timoratae conscientiae*," if the mortal sin is not more than certain, you should decide that it does not exist. In truth, as Alvarez says, it is not possible that such a thing should enter into a soul which abhors it, without the clear knowledge of that soul. Sometimes it is well to forbid scrupulous persons to accuse themselves of such sins, unless they know for certain that they have been guilty. Observe here that you must give general, not special rules to the scrupulous; they can never decide anything by help of a special rule, always doubting whether it be applicable to the case in question which they are sure to suppose quite different from that to which their Confessor applied it.

CCXXXV. When the scrupulous torment themselves about their past confessions, fearing that they did not fully explain all their sins or the attending circumstances; or that they made their general confession without fitting contrition, going on for a length of time dwelling upon their past life; you must forbid them ever deliberately to dwell upon it, or to confess their past sins, unless they are morally certain that they were mortal sins, and that they were never confessed. In fact the doctors teach, that even if through inadvertence they have omitted some mortal sin, scrupulous persons are not obliged to return to the subject, "*sub tanto incommodo et periculo*," unless they are quite certain, that it is essential to the integrity of the confession. Less grave inconvenience would dispense with it. Be resolute in enforcing obedience on this point, and

Of those
who are
scrupu-
lous
concern-
ing their
past con-
fessions.

if the penitent disobeys, reprove him sharply, deprive him of Communion, and mortify him as severely as you can. Scrupulous people ought to be treated with great severity, for if they lose the anchor of obedience they are lost; they will either go mad, or plunge into sin.

Of those
who are
scrupulous
in all
they do.

CCXXXVI. There are others who are afraid of sinning in every action. It is necessary to desire these to act freely without heeding their scruples, as indeed they are bound to do when there is no plain evidence that such an action is sinful. That is what the doctors teach. It does not matter that they will act with fear, that is, without getting rid of their scruple (one can rarely hope for this in scrupulous people), because that fear is not a true "dictamen" of conscience, or a formed conscience (as Gerson judiciously calls it), neither is it a true practical doubt. Neither does it hinder the first judgment, which virtually exists, although the fear hinders them from noticing it. That judgment is, that when performing any action which they do not certainly know to be bad, they are not sinning. In fact in such a case, they are not opposing conscience, but an idle fear. You must insist with a penitent of this character, that he shall conquer his scruple by boldly doing that which the scruple forbids; and also forbid his returning to the subject in confession.

Obedience
the only
safety for
the scrupulous.

CCXXXVII^s. S. Philip Neri used to say that those scrupulous persons who desire to advance in perfection, must put themselves wholly and irrevocably into the hands of their superiors. Those who do not live under a Rule must voluntarily submit themselves

^s Vie de S. Philippe, i. 20.

to a learned and wise Confessor, obeying him as God Himself, laying all their concerns freely and simply before him, and never coming to any determination without his advice. Such an one, S. Philip said, need not fear being called to account by God. He used to add however, that it was necessary to reflect deliberately and pray before choosing a Confessor: and, that once done, not to change without very good cause; to put entire trust in him, confiding everything to him, and to be certain that the Lord will not allow him to be mistaken in anything concerning the soul's salvation. When the devil has exhausted his other wiles, and cannot make a man fall into great sins, he will use every wile to set up mistrust between the penitent and Confessor, and thus he will lead by degrees to great evils. S. Philip used further to say that obedience is the most direct road, by which to obtain perfection quickly. He had a greater esteem for persons who led an ordinary life in obedience, than for such as practised great austerities according to their own fancy, saying that there was nothing more dangerous in the spiritual life than seeking to be guided by one's own judgment, while on the other hand, nothing gave greater strength or went farther to defeat our enemy than obedience to the will of another in the practice of what is good. Obedience, he was wont to repeat, Obedience to God, that is the true sacrifice which we ought to offer upon the altar of our heart.

CCXXXVIII ^h. There are souls called by God to a very high degree of perfection, whose sensitive conscience is alarmed at the least appearance of evil.

On dealing
with tim-
orous
souls.

^h S. F. de Sales, T. ii. p. 653.

Such souls are frequently turning to their Confessors for counsel and direction to tranquillise them, and this kind of direction, which is not the least difficult, is one in which S. Francis de Sales excels. Listen to the answers which he gave to a timid soul whose perfection was very dear to him. "Two things I advise: first that you make a general review of your whole life, in order to a general Confession; a thing without which no upright person should die: and next, that you try little by little to disentangle yourself from worldly affections; to do which, it is not requisite that you break all your ties to the world, but that you loosen their knots, and take out their stitches. It is an indispensable charity, which you owe to yourself, that you should aim at a happy end, and nothing ought to hinder you from busying yourself earnestly so to do. When God bids us love our neighbour as ourself, He implies that we ought to love ourselves; and the chief thing you ought to love in yourself is your soul, and therein conscience, and in conscience purity, and in purity the apprehension of eternal salvation. While we keep faults within our souls, they are thorns; but, once cast out by voluntary self-accusation, they are turned into roses and perfumes, all the more because as our own wickedness is what brings them into the heart, so it is God's Holy Spirit Who drives them out.

"Have no fear, so long as you go to good confessors. If they had not power to hear you, they would send you elsewhere; and there is no need to make this general confession of which you write. In the country, the parish priests whom you find can confess

you. Do not let yourself be tormented with scruples, or too many wishes; go on gently and bravely.

“You should be firm as to the rule I gave you, that what is said in the secrecy of penitence is so sacred that it cannot be told elsewhere. . . Be firm, and consider whatever has been said beneath the sacramental veil as sacred. But have no scruples. You have committed no sin in mentioning it, though you would have done better to conceal it, out of reverence for the Sacrament, which should be so great, that nothing said in it, should be repeated out of it.

CCXXXIX. “Do not be distressed because you do not observe all your lesser faults in order to confess them. You fall often without perceiving it; but the passage which you quote says that the just man falls seven times a day, not that he sees that he is falling, and accordingly he rises again without paying attention to the fact. Do not be troubled about that; tell all that you do know humbly and frankly; and, as to what you have not noticed, leave it to the tender Mercy of Him Who places His Right Hand beneath those who fall without evil intention, so that they may not be bruised, lifting them up so tenderly and so quickly, that they neither know that they have fallen, because God’s Hand raised them, or that they were raised, because He withdrew His Hand so rapidly that they were unconscious of it. As to writing your confession, that is optional. Some think it is better to accuse yourself from memory. Annual confessions are good things; they recall our worthlessness to mind, and make us discover whether we are going forwards or backwards, and quicken our good resolutions; but they must be

Frequent
falls.

made without anxiety or scruples, not so much with a view to being absolved as to be encouraged. It is not necessary to make a very close examination for this, but rather a free one. If you can do it thus, I should recommend it to you, but otherwise, I would rather you left it alone.

“I found all the signs of a true good solid confession in your general confession, and was never better satisfied with any. This is *true truth*, and you may believe that in such matters I speak very honestly. If you omitted any thing, consider whether it was consciously and intentionally, as in such a case no doubt you ought to repeat your confession, if what you omitted was a mortal sin, or if you then believed it so to be; but if it was only a venial sin, or that you omitted it through forgetfulness and imperfect memory, do not be troubled; at my own soul's risk I say that there is no need for you to repeat your confession; it will suffice if you tell the omitted matter to your ordinary confessor. Neither give way to fears that you did not take pains enough with your general confession; for I repeat clearly and positively, that if you made no voluntary omission, there is no occasion to repeat it, as indeed it was quite satisfactorily made. Be at peace on this score.

Preparation for review of life and general confession.

CCXL. “Concerning the review of your inner life. 1) Prepare carefully whatever is wanted to make this journey profitable, and such that it may suffice for several years. 2) Commend it to our Lord. 3) Look over all the windings and examine all the springs of your soul, and see what requires to be re-arranged or replaced. 4) On my side I will offer several Sacrifices to God, to obtain from His goodness the light

and grace needful for you on this occasion. 5) Make ready a great, a very great and absolute confidence first in God's mercy, and next in my affection; but with that I know you are already provided. 6) If, as you go on, your memory and reflection suggest any thing that you think well to write down, do so by all means. 7) The more abnegation and absence of self-will, that is, the more desire and resolution thoroughly to obey God's instructions and inspirations, whatever they may be, that you can bring with you, the better. Our Lord works most in those souls which are wholly His, and which are not pre-occupied with worldly affections and self-will. 8) Above all, do not be anxious about your preparation; make it quietly and with a free mind.

CCXLI. "The omission of some verse of an office or some ceremony is but a venial sin, and when you recall such faults after confession, there is no need to return to your confessor before Communion; on the contrary, it is better not to do so, but to keep it till your next confession if you remember it. Of forgotten faults.

"The great fear which tortured you so cruelly, must be at an end now, since you have every assurance which it is possible to have in this world, that you have entirely expiated your sins in the holy Sacrament of penance. No! You must not begin to doubt again, whether the offshoots of your faults were sufficiently expressed. All theologians agree that there is no occasion to tell all the occurrences and circumstances of sin. If a person says, "I have killed a man," there is no need for him to say that he drew his sword, or that he has caused sorrow to the relations, or given scandal to those who saw him, or raised

a tumult in the street where it happened ; all that is understood without being said : it is enough to say, that he did the deed through passion, or in ambush out of revenge ; that the victim was a layman or an ecclesiastic ; and then leave the judgment to his confessor. If a man says he has burnt a house, there is no need for him to detail all that was in it ; he has only to say whether there were persons in it or not. Be wholly at peace ; your confessions have been more than good ; henceforth look to your progress in virtue, and only think of your past sins in order to humble yourself gently before God, and to bless His Divine Mercy which has forgiven them all through the application of the Sacrament of penance.

“That sweet soul whom both you and I cherish so much, inquires whether she may wait for the presence of her spiritual father to accuse herself of some matter which she forgot in her general confession, and I see she is very anxious to do so. But tell her, I beg you, that it cannot be allowed ; I should not be faithful to her soul if I permitted such an abuse. She must accuse herself of the forgotten fault or faults at the beginning of her next confession, simply and solely, without repeating any of her general confession, which was quite good. But in spite of these forgotten matters, she must not be uneasy ; for in truth the first and principal point in Christian simplicity lies in this frankness in self-accusation where it is necessary, straight-forwardly and fitly, without fearing the confessor who listens ; his office is to hear of sins, not virtues, and that, sins of every kind. Let her then acquit herself of this task bravely and boldly, though with great humility and self-

contempt, without shrinking from displaying her wretchedness to him, by means of whom God pleases to heal her. If indeed her ordinary confessor fills her with too great shame or fear, she may go elsewhere ; but I would have her act with all simplicity, and it seems to me that in reality it is no great matter that she has to tell, and that only fear makes her think much of it. Tell her all this very tenderly, and assure her that if I could yield to her wish, I gladly would. But if afterwards, when she next sees her spiritual father, it is any comfort to her to tell it again to him, she may do so. Judging by her last letter, she does wish it, and I hope it will be useful to her to make a fresh general confession with very ample preparation, which she should not begin until just before leaving home, for fear of being confused.

CCXLII. "There is no occasion to repeat in confession all those little thoughts, which come and go like gnats before our eyes, or the weariness and disgust you feel concerning your vows ; all these are not sins, but annoyances and infirmities. The annual confession is, as you know, to supply the deficiency of ordinary confessions, which are supplemented by this, which also kindles and practises one in a deeper humility. It serves too especially to renew, not our good intentions, but the good resolutions which we ought to apply as remedies to the inclinations, habits, and other sources of these faults to which we find ourselves most liable. It would doubtless be better to make this review before the confessor who has already received one's general confession, so that by examining the past and present life together, more effectual resolutions may be made. But such as you, who

cannot do this, may take some other confessor, the wisest and best attainable.

“I repeat that in this review you need not note the numbers or minor details of your faults; it is enough to mention generally wherein you chiefly fail, what are your principal mental distortions; not how many times you fell, but if you are very subject to fall. For instance, do not try to ascertain how often you have been angry; perhaps it would take a long time; simply say, if you are liable to this fault; whether, when it occurs, it lasts long, if it is very bitter or violent anger, and what occasions provoke it most frequently; play, pride, or vanity; melancholy or obstinacy; and thus you will soon finish your review, without any great strain upon your memory or your time. It is quite certain that some lapses into mortal sin, so long as there was no intention of remaining in it, nor any hardening, do not hinder a progress in devotion; which, although it be lost by mortal sin, is yet found again on any true repentance: so that these annual reviews are most useful to the weak; for if their first resolutions have not been strong, the next will be stronger; and, by frequent efforts, people become strong; so that none should lose courage, but honestly and humbly face their infirmities, accuse themselves, ask pardon, and implore the help of God.

CCXLIII. “You tell me that whenever you have had any strong feeling of anger or any other temptation, you always feel a scruple until you have confessed it. Well then, tell it in your review, but not as a matter of confession, or to learn how to act under it; that is, when you know clearly that you

did not consent to it; for if you say, "I accuse myself of having had a strong inclination to anger during two days, but I did not yield to it," you are telling your virtues, not your faults. 'But!' you say, 'I am doubtful as to whether I was to blame.' Then you must examine carefully whether this doubt is well founded. Perhaps for a quarter of an hour during those two days you were somewhat careless in putting aside the angry feeling. If so, say simply that for a quarter of an hour you were careless in resisting an angry feeling, without saying anything about the two days, unless you tell that, either with a view to receiving instruction from your confessor, or as part of your review, in which case it may be well to tell it. But in ordinary confessions it would be better to say nothing about it, as you do so only for your own satisfaction, and if you suffer some little discomfort from not telling it, endure that, like anything else which you cannot help. It is the same with your general account. In both you must aim at perfect simplicity. Now do you think it will do to say, 'If I confess such and such a thing, what will my confessor say? or what will he think of me?' Certainly not. He will say or think what he pleases; provided that he gives me absolution and that I have done my duty, that is enough; and as, after confession, it is not the time to examine oneself as to whether one has told everything rightly, but rather to place oneself calmly and attentively before the Lord, to whom we have been reconciled, and thank Him for His Goodness, without troubling about what we may have forgotten, so it is with our rendering account. One must say simply what comes, and

not think more about it. But then, as it would not do to go to confession without examining oneself, for fear of finding something weighty to confess, neither must one neglect looking into oneself before giving one's account, for fear of finding something which one would shrink from telling. One must not be so sensitive over everything, or be perpetually running to one's Superior with every little trouble, which perhaps will be over in a quarter of an hour. One must learn to bear patiently the little matters for which there is no remedy, inasmuch as they are for the most part the results of our imperfect nature; inequalities of temper, of will and wish, which at one time cause us great vexation and a strong desire to speak, and then suddenly as great a disinclination to do so; and similar infirmities, to which we are liable and shall be, as long as this frail perishable life endures.

CCXLIV. "I would have great respect paid in confession to your confessor, for—(to say nothing of the honour due to the Priesthood) we ought to look upon them as Angels sent by God to reconcile us to His Divine Goodness; and also as His lieutenants upon earth, and therefore we owe them all reverence, even though they may at times betray that they are human, and have human infirmities, and perhaps ask curious questions which are not part of the confession, such as your name, what penances or virtues you practise, what are your temptations &c. I would have you answer, although you are not obliged to do so; it is not well to say that one must do nothing but accuse one's faults. It is not so. You may say whatever you will in confession, pro-

vided that you speak only of yourself, and say nothing about others.

“If you are afraid to answer, fearing to be confused, as for instance with respect to temptations; if you fear to be pressed as to the detail, you may say, ‘I have temptations, Father, but, by God’s grace, I do not think I have offended Him.’ But never say that you are forbidden to confess this or that. If you wish it, tell your confessor honestly all that troubles you, but, I repeat, never speak of other people.

CCXLV. “We have a reciprocal duty to our confessors, and that is, to be silent concerning what they may have said to us, except anything generally edifying, beyond which we may not go. Confessors do not always intend to bind you to all they advise under pain of sin; their counsels are often simple direction, but nevertheless you should greatly prize and take account of all that is said to you in confession. You cannot think how great benefit there is in this Sacrament for souls that approach it with fitting humility. You must never complain of your confessor. If anything made you uncomfortable about your confession, you should simply tell your Superior that if she permits it, you wish to go to some one else; by which means you will not disclose the infirmities of your confessor, while you can change to some one, more suitable; but you should not do this hastily and about trifles: but avoid extremes, for though it is not desirable that you should be exposed to great defects in a confessor, neither is it good to be so sensitive that you cannot put up with trifling ones.

CCXLVI. “I wish the Sisters to take great pains to particularize their faults in confession; I mean that

Of simplicity in confession.

those who have nothing to tell that requires absolution should mention some special sin. Accusing oneself of several angry impulses, and such like, is not good. Anger or depression are passions, and their impulses are not sin, all the more that it is not in our power to hinder them. Anger must be uncontrolled, or lead us to uncontrolled actions, to make it sin. You must therefore particularize something that leads to sin. I very greatly wish that all would take great pains to be very true, simple and charitable in confession (truth and simplicity are the same thing), to tell their faults plainly without excuses or artifices, remembering that we are speaking to God, from Whom nothing is concealed. You should be charitable; by which I mean, never bringing your neighbour into your confession. If for instance you have to confess that you have murmured within yourself or with your Sisters, because the Superior has spoken harshly to you, do not say that your murmur was caused by her brusque manner; be content to say that you did murmur. Only tell the evil you have done, not the cause, or what led to it. Never disclose the faults of others either directly or indirectly in telling your own, nor give the confessor any reason to suspect others. Do not bring useless accusations into the confessional. You have had uncharitable thoughts, vain thoughts, distractions in your prayers; if you encouraged such deliberately, say so honestly, and do not rest satisfied with saying, that you did not take sufficient pains to be recollected during your prayers. If you have been careless about casting aside a distraction, say so. Those general accusations are no good in confession.

CCXLVII. "It is not good to be over-sensitive about confessing all our lesser imperfections, since we are not bound even to confess venial sins unless we wish to do so; but whatever we do confess, we should thoroughly intend to correct; else it is an abuse to confess them. Again, it is not well to be worried because one cannot remember all one's faults in confession, it is not possible that any one who makes very constant self-examination can remember every little passing imperfection as well as faults of more importance. You can mention such to the Lord each time that you perceive them. A mental act of humiliation, or a sigh will do that. You ask, how to make your act of contrition in a short time? I reply, that you require scarcely any time for it, since nothing more is needed than to prostrate yourself before God in a spirit of humility and in repentance for having offended Him. The sadness of true penitence ought not to be called sadness so much as displeasure, or a detestation of evil. This sadness is never wearisome or peevish: it does not deaden the mind, but makes it lively and diligent; it does not cast down the heart, rather raising it by prayer and hope, and bringing forth fresh springs of devotion. It is a sadness, which in its deepest form brings forth the sweetness of abundant consolation. Thus S. Augustine says, 'Let the penitent ever be sad, but let him always rejoice in his sadness.' 'The sorrow which works out true repentance never to be repented of,' says Cassian, 'is obedient, affable, docile, cheerful, tender, patient; the true offspring of charity; so that reaching out over all suffering of body or contrition of mind, it is after a fashion joy-

Of sadness
in confession.

ous, kindled and excited with the hope of great gain : filled with the sweetness of patience and longsuffering, having within it the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Such is true penitence, and such is holy sadness, which certainly is neither fretful or melancholy, but only earnest in detesting, rejecting and avoiding the evil of sin, both past and future."

Of deaf and
dumb
adults.

✓ CCXLVIII. In the case of a deaf and dumb penitent, you must retire to some private place, where you can in a measure understand his sins and his contrition by means of signs. You may be able to learn something of his faults, and of the way to understand him and to make him understand you, from some of those with whom he lives. If you can make out any one of his sins, with tokens of repentance, you will absolve him. But I should absolve him conditionally, if I had no moral certainty as to his dispositions. If he knows how to write, he ought to write his confession ; for, if he is bound by duty to a certain end, he is bound to all the ordinary means of accomplishing it. I say *ordinary* means, because if writing was extremely difficult to him, or there was a risk of disclosure, it would cease to be an ordinary means.

CCXLIX. If a deaf woman, or one hard of hearing (*surdastra*) present herself at the confessional, and you perceive this through your interrogations, it is asked, can you tell her aloud to come again in a fitting time and place ? This case often arises in missions, and occasions much disquiet to the poor missionaries. I answer, if the confessor perceives the

deafness at the beginning of the confession, he may unhesitatingly tell her to come again. But if he only perceive it in the course of the confession, seeing that the penitent does not answer his questions pertinently, then he cannot tell her aloud to come again, because he would give occasion to those around the confessional to think that she had confessed some grave, or at least some gravely doubtful, fault. If then she had accused herself of any mortal sin, give her absolution, if she is rightly disposed; or at least, absolve her conditionally. Not to violate the sacramental seal, you cannot tell her to come back, and you cannot ascertain how she is disposed: give her some slight penance, since, on account of her deafness, you are obliged to speak, so as to be heard by others.

CCL. If you should be called to an unhappy criminal condemned to death, treat him with all possible charity and patience. Teach him in the very first visit, that death is a grace sent him from God in order to his salvation. Tell him that we must all die, and that ere long, to enter upon an infinite Eternity. Then talk to him of the blessed life of the Saints, and the misery of those that are lost; exhorting him to thank God for having spared him till now, instead of cutting him off in the midst of his sins. Finally, induce him to accept his death in union with that which the Saviour bore for love of him. Encourage him by telling him that if he does this, he will be saved and recompensed in Paradise. Then lead him to confess, and fearlessly to tell all his sins. Specially inquire whether he entertains hatred towards anyone. After you have given him absolution, communicate him several times. On

Of condemned criminals.

leaving the prison, say, "Now, my son, let us follow Jesus Christ Who went up to Mount Calvary to die for our sins." When you come to the place of execution, reconcile and absolve him once more; saying afterwards, "Be comforted, you are in God's grace: the gates of Heaven are open to receive you; Jesus Christ there awaits you. Unite your death to that of the Saviour, Who died for love of you amid sufferings and humiliations. You love Him, do you not? Then say with me, 'Lord, I love Thee above all things: I accept death, in accordance with Thy Holy Will, and in expiation of my sins. I hope that Thou hast forgiven me. I repent anew of the sins I have committed against Thee. I desire to be speedily united to Thee in Paradise, and to love Thee through all Eternity.' When the covering is put over his eyes and he mounts the ladder, say, 'My son, call upon the Saviour. Accept death because of your sins. Protest that you do not consent to any temptation of Satan.' And at the last moment, 'The Saviour opens His Arms to receive you; say, Lord, I have sinned against Thee, but I repent me of my sins, I love Thee with all my heart. God of my soul, Thou callest me; behold I come. Father, to Thee I commend my heart and soul.'"

CCLI. If the condemned man should obstinately refuse to make confession, 1) pray for him, and commend him to the prayers of others, especially to religious communities; 2) Tell him that whether he confesses or not, justice will equally take its course; 3) Ask him if he despairs, from having made any compact with Satan; if he have, tell him that any such compact is null, inasmuch as his soul belongs

to God, and if he will but retract that evil will, God will forgive him all his sins. 4) Inquire whether hatred towards anyone is the cause of his obstinacy. In your earlier visits, abstain from pressing him overmuch to confess; rather dwell upon the mercy of God, the happiness of Paradise, the pains of hell, and that death, to which we are all condemned. Tell him of some instances of sinners who died impenitent, and of condemned men who have died as Saints. Such was the condemned man who died innocent, and when questioned, why he had not asserted his innocence, replied, "I have for many years asked that I might have grace to die amid humiliations like to our Lord; now my request is granted, and would you have me forfeit it?" And so saying, he went joyously to death. Then leave your charge to his own reflections. You will come again, and try whether he has changed his mind; saying, "My son; death draws near, what will you do? It depends upon you to decide between Heaven and hell. Consider that if you die impenitent, your repentance will be through all Eternity, and there will be no remedy to your misery." If he is still hardened, pray with him, and kneeling before him, intreat him not to cast away his soul. If he is still unmoved, turn to your Crucifix: if he goes to the place of execution without yielding, call upon the people to kneel down and pray for this hardened sinner. It may be useful to threaten him with the prospect of damnation, and to warn him that its bitterest pain will be the recollection that he has abused these opportunities given him by God. But return quickly to the gentle tone: and if, even on the scaffold, he offers to confess,

intreat the officials to permit him to do so. They are bound to grant so much. I am speaking of one who has made no confession. If he had confessed, you would cause him to make an act of contrition, telling him his sins, and then give him absolution.

Conduct of
S. Francis.

CCLII¹. S. F. de Sales' loving zeal led him to seek every opportunity of leading all men to love and worship God. He often visited the prisons. One day a friend met him going into a cell, and asked what he was doing. The Saint took his hand and said smiling; "Come with me, and let us be the prisoners of Jesus Christ." His friend suggested that at all events they should wait for some light: upon which the holy Bishop took a torch in his hand, refusing to give it to an attendant, saying that perhaps by that light God would help him to make His Name known to the poor prisoners he was about to visit. But in truth his own words and deeds shed abroad a brighter light than that of any torch; for while he was teaching and exhorting them, he knelt beside them, he wept with them, or dried their tears; he spent all he had for them, gave them food and drink, like a Mother comforting her children; and then having won their hearts, he led them to confession, and to make acts of noble and generous resignation, so that men who were condemned to death would express their readiness to endure everything if only Mons^{sr} de Genève would be with them at the last. All this was done with such gentleness, such zeal and love, that people flocked as though to a sermon, and often those employed in the execu-

¹ Vie de S. F. de Sales par le P. Talon, p. 86 sqq.

tion would beg him to hear their confessions, saying openly, whenever their end came, how happy they should be, if they could hope to have the consolation afforded by one so loving and devout.

S. F. de Sales used also to go to the hospitals and to private houses to visit the sick, and prepare them for a holy death. God had given him so remarkable a gift of doing this, that his first words seemed to carry comfort. On one occasion he was asked to go to a man who was in utter despair, and refused to listen either to priest or doctor. Directly that S. Francis appeared, the poor man cried out, "Oh sir, why did you not come sooner?" and throwing himself at the Saint's feet, he implored him not to go away. The holy Bishop promised not to leave him and the sufferer grew calm, received the Sacraments, and died peacefully. His last words were, "Blessed be God for allowing me to die in the arms of my good father and good Bishop."

CCLIII. S. Francis' secret in all these cases, was to win men's hearts; to show them tenderly and briefly the importance of a good preparation for the future state which was so near; and then making them say an act of faith with their whole heart, as the turning-point of salvation. With condemned criminals he would dwell upon some similar case, so as to lead them to make known the state of their conscience; and then he would help them so tenderly and lovingly, saying, "Well, now we see the life you have led: how gladly would you have had it more pure and innocent, and not have done this or that! O how good God is! Would you not rather die than sin thus, if you could begin anew? I am certain

you would. Take courage, my good friends; for on this moment your whole eternity rests; courage then; let us all give ourselves to God, let us vow eternal faithfulness to Him together. Well! do you not gladly accept your punishment, and would you not give ten thousand lives if you had them, to expiate your sins? Say so with your whole heart. Every one you see, my dear children, will have to bear witness for or against you; nay, I myself, who love you so sincerely; but it will be for you; for I see that you give yourself to God, love Him Alone, abhor your past life, offer Him your death, and choose Him as your portion for ever. Let us thankfully part with all things, parents, children, friends, for His love." He always induced such persons to ask pardon of all men, even of such as might have been the cause of their death^k.

ARTICLE III.

Treatment of those who are favoured with special graces.

General
advice of
S. Francis
as to the
treatment
of women.

CCLVIII. Shortly after S. Francis was consecrated Bishop, he told his confessor that God had inspired him with an ardent desire to labour for the salvation of souls, and he had seen, as though in a picture, all the features of such special virtues as are required in every condition of life. As he had the power of making his instructions useful both to men

^k CCLIV-CCLVII. Of those tormented by the devil with visions &c. omitted.

and women, God endowed him with remarkable energy in training these latter to solid virtue, and in teaching them that Christian heroism is noways incompatible with the weakness of their sex, or the sensitiveness of their temperament. We have a sufficient proof of this in his Philothea, who is still the model of so many Christian women. One noble lady having read it, wrote to the Saint as follows:—
“During the last year I have read your Philothea six times; I do not know if her conversion has made me better, but I know that I long to be more like her: I have also lately read all your Theotime, and I have learnt the difference between the love of God and that of the world or the court. So I am going to try and model my life upon that of your Philothea, and like Theotime to love nothing save God, or for Him and according to His holy will. I entreat you, Sir, to assist me with your prayers and some special advice. I would not ask it, if I were not convinced that God has opened the book of consciences to you, and that when I tell you who I am, I tell you *what* I am, and all that passes within me. Moreover your devotions and practices seem so well adapted to my disposition and to the weakness of my sex, that I think I shall be easily able to do whatever you advise me. I know several ladies who are so fortunate as to be under your holy direction, and they have told me that God has given you to our present times, that you may lead us into His ways; and that we may hope to become Saints, if we will but follow the loving laws of your holiness. As for me, I choose you as my good father and director, and I vow that, wishing to be wholly God’s, I offer my-

self to be your dear daughter in Christ. Farewell, very dear Father, go on as you have begun, and make all the women in the world into saints."

It is a pity that we have not got our Saint's answer, which doubtless contained all that could be needed for the spiritual direction of a lady in the world. Failing that, we will gather together his general direction to such persons from his writings.

CCLIX. First then, as women's devotion is apt to be changeable, he sought to strengthen their judgment and confirm their will, so as to keep them in the grace of perseverance; next, he preferred exercising them in practical virtue, rather than in contemplation, making them serve God long after the example of Martha, before admitting them to follow Mary. His maxim was, that one must approach Jesus before seeking to be united to Him; that one must serve that Dear Master, wash His Feet with one's tears and wipe them with one's hair, before aspiring to lean upon His Bosom, and to rest with Him in the union of holy love.

Thirdly, he banished everything which tends to make devotion ridiculous or disagreeable, saying that God and His holiness could not dwell in a soul without the sweetness overflowing upon our neighbour; not that he would hinder those precious tears which fell from a heart which is filled with Divine Love, but he would have them flow quietly, and like that Indian river which is flooded during the night, but returns to its ordinary channel so soon as the sun is risen. Fourthly, he required great simplicity. He used to say that cunning and artifice were like a blister, spoiling women's natural gentleness; adding

that when once women could get rid of all hypocrisy and disguise, their devotion was stronger than that of men. But inasmuch as their simplicity may easily degenerate into folly, which leads to delusion, he would have them be prudent, and do nothing without advice, as else they were in danger of mistaking dreams for revelations, and of imitating spiders which pass their whole lives in weaving little webs which, after all, only catch flies. Fifthly, he would have good women to stand amid the vanities and assaults of the world like rocks amid the waves of the sea, living as, tradition says, the halcyon lives, gazing only upon Heaven. "Such is the portrait," says S. Francis, "of a woman who, though in the midst of the world, lives according to God's Holy Spirit, so that, amid all earthly snares and attractions, her eyes and heart are wholly turned to Him, and that while living among men, her lips and mind are altogether occupied in praising and blessing Him with the holy Angels." His sixth precept was that women should diligently follow the counsels given by Solomon and by S. Paul concerning an excessive curiosity. He would not have them over-keen for knowledge, or waste time upon the acquisition of what is useless as to their natural duties, and tends only to vain-glory.

Seventhly, he was a mortal enemy to that false piety which is addicted to idleness; always teaching that a woman's true devotion lies in spending her time usefully, economising it well, and making it profitable for eternity. Eighthly, he said that a Christian woman should above all things shun every thing which could wound modesty. Modesty and

honour, he said, were the very life of a woman, without which she was but a living tomb. He was once heard to say to a licentious woman; "Good Heavens, my unhappy daughter, dare you wear a woman's face with a sorceress's soul? If you do not speedily amend your life, I shall intreat all your relations to deprive you of a home which you dishonour." Ninthly, he did not wish his penitents to shut themselves up. On the contrary, he liked them to mix in society according to their position, and to take part in all that was suitable to their rank; but he urged that their virtue should be like the so-called bird of paradise, which is commonly said never to perch on the earth, but when weary it is supposed to cast out certain little filaments to the branches of some tree whence it hangs for awhile. Even so if a pious woman attaches herself to something of earth, S. Francis would have her do so only in and through God; just as pearl-fishers reject the oyster-shells, and only prize the tiny treasures which they contain.

Of the
treatment
of the
truly
pious.

CCLX¹. You will advise pious women who Communicate frequently^m, [to confess frequently.] If

¹ S. Liguori, no. 96. &c.

^m Weekly Communion was not considered frequent in the earliest ages. S. Liguori considered it to imply communicating several times in the week. "After the Xth century," he says, "lukewarmness became so general among the faithful until the XVIth, that but few received three times a year, and any who communicated six or seven times a year were marvels. It is mentioned in the Life of S. F. de Sales, as something remarkable, that his father received once a month. It was considered astonishing that S. F. de Borgia, while yet a secular, communicated every Sunday, and people said it was too frequent. But notwithstanding this unhappy indifference, we must maintain that neither monthly nor weekly Communion can be called frequent, according to the an-

they come with nothing save imperfections which are not clearly even sins, Bonacina says you may absolve them conditionally; but I should consider this as applicable to rare cases only, where a person could not mention any certain faults in their past life, or could only do so with difficulty. If penitents confess fixed habitual sins, as impatience, greediness, distractions and the like, you must ascertain whether they have exerted themselves to conquer the tendency. If so, you may consider such failings rather as the result of human imperfection than of a want of contrition and good intention. But not if they perpetually fall into the same faults, without any attempt at resistance.

CCLXI. Beware of ever hindering pious people, especially women, from seeking another Confessor; and if they do so, show that you are glad of it. Even more, you should sometimes send them to other Confessors; always excepting those extra-scrupulous souls, for whom one might fear great disquietude, if they went to a Confessor who did not know the state of their conscience. Never show a wish to have the direction of anybody, and never speak ill of other Confessors, rather finding excuses for any mistakes they may have made. Do not receive persons who want to leave their own Confessor, without urgent reasons, "*nisi adsit urgens causa*," such is the advice of S. Philip Neri, S. F. de Sales, and S. Carlo Borromeo. The opposite course leads to distraction of mind, divisions and sometimes to scandals. Some repugnance or aversion is not a sufficient reason to eient discipline of the Church." "*De la Communion fréquente*" p. 7 and 31.

justify a penitent in changing his Confessor, neither is a certain want of confidence in his advice. All that, says S. Theresa, is often merely a temptation of Satan. S. F. de Sales says, "It is not well to change one's Confessor without ample cause, but neither must we refuse to do so, when sufficient reason for such a change arises." But a lack of holiness is a just reason for changing, according to S. Theresa. "If the Confessor is subject to any vanity," she says, "we must change; for if he is vain, he will make his penitents vain." Lack of science may be a good reason for changing, but it ought to be well proved first. S. Theresa says, that the penitent may take advice in his doubts from some other wise Director.

Motives
and means
for leading
souls to
perfection.

CCLXII. Avoid partiality. Some Confessors form special attachments, and give all their zeal, their time and attention to certain people. Of course one person may need more help than another, but it is one thing to give help, and another to occupy yourself with an individual to the hindrance of others. In such a case it is well to assign a special day and hour for the needy person, so that your other penitents may not suffer. Do not speak loud when confessing pious people, even though you are not speaking of their sins: you may make others afraid to come to you. Do not readily allow young women to cut off their hair, or adopt the religious habit: but prove them first for a long time in devotion and piety. There have been many who, owing to a want of caution on the part of their Confessor, have turned aside to the world, and given scandal by marrying. Do not allow young women to be taught by men. Do not encourage them to be running a-

bout to Churches, at the risk of displeasing their parents. Teach them to be very obedient, and to do whatever is wanted at home.

CCLXIII. As to the direction of pious persons, *Meditation.* remember the words of the Lord to Jeremiah: "Ecce constitui te super gentes, ut evellas et dissipes, et ædifices et plantes;" which are addressed to all Confessors, whose duty it is, not only to root up vice from their penitents' hearts, but to plant all virtue therein. To this end it will be useful to set before beginners the best way of leading holy souls on to perfection. One must not turn away from sinners, but it is specially acceptable to God if we adorn His spouses, that is to say, if we cultivate such souls as are wholly dedicated to Him. One perfect soul is dearer to Him than a thousand imperfect; therefore when you see a soul that is free from mortal sin, you should spare no pains to lead it on in the path of perfection and of Divine love. Set before such an one the countless reasons, why we should love our Infinitely good God, and the gratitude which we owe to Jesus Christ Who so loved us as to die for us. Set before him the danger of those who turn a deaf ear when God calls them to a more perfect life. Direction of such pious souls lies chiefly in three things; meditation or contemplation, mortification, and frequenting the Sacraments. Let us consider each.

CCLXIV. When the Confessor finds a soul which abhors mortal sin, and desires to advance in the love of God, he ought first to teach that person to practise mental prayer; to meditate on the eternal truths and the goodness of God. Although meditation is

not so necessary to salvation as prayer, yet it is necessary to keep souls in the grace of God: sin is compatible with other pious exercises; but sin and meditation are incompatible: one or the other must be forsaken. S. Theresa says that "the soul which perseveres in meditation, will assuredly reach the haven of salvation, whatever sins Satan may lead her to commit." Accordingly there is no pious practice from which the devil is so anxious to distract us; "for he knows well," says S. Theresa, "that a soul which is faithful to prayer is lost to him." Moreover love is the cord which binds us to God, and the foundation of love is prayer or meditation. "In meditatione mea exardescet ignis."

How to
love.

CCLXV. You will then begin by training this soul to the habit of prayer. Let him begin with half an hour daily; the period given to it will increase with his fervour. The penitent may tell you that he has neither time nor place suitable for this exercise, but do not be hindered by these difficulties. Tell him to lift up his soul to God, to think upon the Verities of the Faith, and the last things, especially Death, or upon the Passion, early in the morning or in the day whenever he is most undisturbed, or even during his work, if he has no other opportunity. If he can read, it is well to use some devotional book, at all events at first. Tell him to choose the subjects which kindle his devotion most; to pause when he experiences any holy thought, and to turn his reflections into acts, prayers, and resolutions. 1) Acts, that is to say acts of humility, gratitude, faith, hope, and above all of contrition and love, offering and placing himself in God's Hands,

and repeating oftenest that act to which he feels most drawn. 2) Prayer. Our whole perfection depends on prayer, as S. Augustine says, the Lord does not ordinarily grant His grace, especially that of perseverance, to anything but prayer. Our Saviour has said, "Ask and ye shall receive." Hence we may conclude, says S. Theresa, that those who do not ask, will not receive. If then we desire to be saved, we must pray without ceasing, and above all for those two graces; perseverance, and the love of God: and undoubtedly the fittest season for prayer is meditation; he who does not practise it, rarely prays, because he rarely gives himself up to the consideration of what graces he needs, or of the necessity for prayer, and so those who do not meditate can hardly continue in God's friendship. 3) Resolutions; in order that meditation be not barren, but that the soul may profit by the light received in prayer. S. F. de Sales says that we should never end our meditation without forming some special resolution, to avoid some fault to which we are prone, or to practise some virtue in which we know ourselves to be deficient.

CCLXVI. You must demand an account of their meditation from these persons, whether they have practised it, and how? Make them be specially particular in confessing the omission, if they neglect it; for if they neglect meditation, all will be lost. S. Theresa says that "the soul which forsakes meditation, will not need Satan's help to be lost; she thrusts herself into hell." How much good Confessors might do if they were only careful in this respect! Surely they will have to render an account to

The Confessor must require a reckoning of his penitents.

God for their neglect, inasmuch as they are pledged to every exertion on their penitents' behalf. How many souls they might save, and direct in the way of perfection, if they would but take the trouble of training them in meditation, at the outset of their spiritual life. It is rare that a soul quits God, when once it is confirmed in a habit of meditation. You should urge it not only upon the good, but also upon sinners, who often wallow like swine in the mire, for lack of reflection.

Of consolation
in
dryness.

CCLXVII. You should especially require an account of their meditation from those penitents who are suffering from spiritual desolation. The Lord often draws a soul which has given itself to Him, by special lights, tears, and sensible consolation; but after a time He ceases to do so, in order to raise it to a greater perfection by detachment from such sensible consolations, into which some imperfections and some self-love are apt to glide. Doubtless sensible consolation, and especially natural drawings are gifts from God, but they are not God Himself. Thus in order to draw his spouses from His gifts, and force them to love the Giver with a more pure love, He permits them to lose their former delight in meditation, and to find dreariness, dryness, trouble, sometimes even temptation, instead. You should take the greatest pains to encourage such afflicted souls, lest in their trouble they should forsake their appointed meditation and Communions. Remind such persons of S. F. de Sales' words, "that one ounce of meditation in the midst of desolation weighs heavier in God's sight than a hundred pounds in the midst of consolation." In truth, he who loves God for

the sake of consolation, loves God's consolation better than God Himself; while on the contrary, he best proves that he really loves God, who loves Him and follows on when deprived of all consolation. It may be useful to young Confessors to give some ideas concerning contemplation and its different degrees, as well as concerning other supernatural gifts, with the rules laid down by the Masters of the spiritual life for the guidance of souls that are favoured by God with these graces.

CCLXVIII. S. John of the Cross says that if you meet with a soul which has received the gift of contemplation, it is important for you to know how to direct it, and save it from illusions, as otherwise you may harm it greatly, for which you will have to give account to God. Contemplation differs widely from meditation. In meditation you seek God by an effort of thought; in contemplation you see God, already found, without any effort. In meditation the soul acts itself; in contemplation it is God Who acts, the soul meanwhile passively receiving the gifts of grace without any act of its own; the light of Divine Love with which it is filled rendering it tenderly attentive to the goodness of God, Which pours such grace upon it.

Advice on contemplation.

CCLXIX. You should bear in mind that before He endows a soul with the gift of contemplation, the Lord generally leads them through the meditation of *recollection*, or of *contemplative repose*, to use the language of their great spiritual teachers. This is not as yet infused contemplation, inasmuch as the soul is still in an active state. This *recollection*, which is natural (I will speak further on of that which is

Six different degrees.

Supernatural,) takes place when the mind has no need, so to say, to go forth to consider a mystery or verity of the faith; but when detached from creatures, and withdrawn as it were within the soul, it reflects upon this verity or mystery not only without fatigue, but with great delight. *Contemplative repose* is almost the same thing. The only difference is, that in recollection the soul remains devoted to some particular pious thought, while in repose a general knowledge of God attracts and draws it lovingly towards Him. Certain mystics say that although this recollection or repose be a natural prayer yet that as soon as the soul experiences such, it ought to discontinue not only meditation, but all acts of will, love, offering or resignation, and remain lovingly united to God in absolute stillness. I cannot agree to this. I do not deny that the soul should cease to meditate when it is sufficiently recollected, because then it has found what it sought; the rather that, as P. Seigneri well says, ordinary meditation produces the contemplation technically called *acquired*, which at once recognises those truths which were previously the result of reflection and labour. But why should the soul therefore abstain from profitable acts of will? On the contrary, what moment could be more favourable to them than such recollection? It is true that S. F. de Sales recommended S. Chantal not to frame any fresh act when in her meditation she became united to God. But why? Because she already enjoyed passive contemplation. While however the soul is in an active state, how can acts of will hinder the operations of grace? S. Francis taught certain pious souls who were under

his direction a number of aspirations to be made at that time. If the soul is in a state of passive contemplation, then, although it cannot acquire any merit, since it is inactive, nevertheless it receives great vigour to a subsequent more perfect action. On the contrary, in the active state, it cannot merit without action, by producing acts of will. "Thus," concludes P. Seigneri, "when God speaks and acts, the soul ought to be silent and suspend all action; doing nothing beyond giving loving heed to the Divine operations. If God does not speak, in order to unite itself to Him, the soul should have recourse to meditation, affections, prayers, resolutions, according to its wants. But all such acts should be made without effort, the soul choosing out those to which it feels most drawn.

CCLXX. Remember that, before He leads a soul to contemplation, God generally tries it by *supernatural dryness*, in order to purify it of its imperfections, which are obstacles to contemplation. Dryness is divided into *sensible* and *substantial*. Of the latter I will speak hereafter. Sensible dryness, when it is natural, is accompanied with weariness of the things of God, and with darkness and clouds, more or less lasting; when it is supernatural, it plunges the soul into deep darkness, far more lasting and increasing. Nevertheless in this condition the soul feels on one side more detached from creatures, and more absorbed with God, Whom it desires ardently to love perfectly; but, on the other side, it feels a kind of powerlessness to realise this desire by reason of its imperfections, which seem to merit God's hatred: nevertheless the soul does not discontinue a

The dealings of God.

courageous practice of virtue. This sensible dryness is a gift of grace, a supernatural light; but a light which is accompanied by trouble and darkness. It would fain communicate itself instantly, and meeting with senses and faculties in the soul which are unfit to receive it by reason of affections which are sensible and in some sort material, it causes a darkness in that soul, which is very distressing no doubt, but very useful. Thanks to that darkness, the soul detaches itself from all sensible pleasure, whether corporeal or spiritual; and acquires a greatly extended knowledge of its own misery, its powerlessness for good; as well as a vast reverence for God, Whom it beholds in His Majesty and terror. Encourage the soul whom you find in this state; tell it to look for great things from God, Who deals thus with it; tell it not to weary itself with meditation, but to humble itself, offer itself to God, and give itself up with entire resignation to the ever-beneficent disposal of His most tender Will.

CCLXXI. When the Lord has purified a soul from all sensible affections, He usually communicates the gift of contemplation, of supernatural recollection, of repose and union. But before union and after recollection and repose, He generally tries the soul by *spiritual* dryness, which is therefore called *substantial*. God means by this, that the soul should be prostrate within itself. Dryness of feeling is the taking away of sensible devotion; dryness of spirit is a celestial light, by which God shews its own nothingness to a soul; and then the soul experiences a most cruel agony. On the one side it is more than ever resolved to conquer all and serve God; on the o-

ther, being more alive to its imperfections, it feels as though He rejected and forsook it because of its ingratitude. Pious exercises, meditation, Communion, mortification only make things worse, because inasmuch as the soul performs them all wearily and heavily, it believes that they do but render it more guilty and more displeasing to God. Sometimes these much tried souls will even imagine that they hate God, that He has rejected them, and that they are already beginning to taste the torments of hell, because He has forsaken them. In other cases the Lord permits this desolation to be accompanied by a thousand other temptations and movements, of impurity, anger, blasphemy, unbelief, and above all, despair. Not being able to distinguish the resistance of their will in this wild confusion and utter darkness, they fear to have given consent, and believe themselves more than ever forsaken of God. They have really resisted, but the surrounding darkness hinders them from knowing it, at least with certainty.

CCLXXII. If you have to deal with a soul of this kind, who, though going on in the way of perfection, yet believes itself to be forsaken of God, do not be alarmed at the sight of its confusion, or at its feelings of fear and despair. Beware of seeming timid or perplexed. On the contrary, exhort such an one earnestly to fear nothing, and to have ever new confidence in God, reminding him of what our Lord once said to S. Theresa, that no one ever loses God without knowing that he has lost Him. Tell him that all these temptations of blasphemy, unbelief, impurity and despair, are not with consent; but are trials which, if borne with resignation,

Conduct of
the Con-
fessor.

will strengthen his union with God. Tell him that God never hates any soul that loves Him, and desires to do His will; but that it is thus He treats the souls He loves best. "It is with dryness and temptations," says S. Theresa, "that God tries his friends. Even if the dryness lasted all one's life, one should not give up meditation; the time will come when it will be repaid:"—a most admirable consolation for an afflicted soul. Exhort such then to hope stedfastly, since God is leading them by the surest way; the way of the Cross. Meanwhile advise such a one, 1) to humble himself, and acknowledge himself unworthy of such favour by reason of past unfaithfulness; 2) to resign himself wholly to the Will of God, offering himself to bear these and all other trials as He pleases; 3) to throw himself simply into the Arms of Divine Mercy.

Verities of
contem-
plation.

CCLXXIII. Sensible dryness lasts until the senses are purified and the soul is rendered fit for contemplation. Mental dryness lasts until the soul is fit for divine union. Observe that the Lord sometimes allows this dryness to return after union; in order says S. Theresa, that the soul may not grow careless, but may from time to time feel its own nothingness. When then the affections are purified, and sensible dryness is past, the Lord admits the soul to contemplation. This is affirmative or negative. It is *affirmative*, when, by means of the Divine light and without any effort of its own, the soul beholds some created truth, such as the misery of hell or the blessedness of Paradise &c, or some uncreated truth, such as the Goodness, Mercy, Love, or Power of God. It is *negative*, when the soul recognises the Divine Per

fections generally, not individually, and when this recognition inspires it with an elevated notion of the greatness of God. This kind of contemplation also gives a confused idea of certain created verities, such as the horrible torments of hell &c. Let us proceed to consider the first steps of contemplation, i. e. recollection and repose; going on later to union.

CCLXXIV. The first step in contemplation, is *supernatural recollection*: we have already spoken of natural recollection; which is, when the soul gathers its faculties in order to consider God within itself. I must observe that it is called *natural*, not because the soul can practise it by its own power; (every good action by which we deserve eternal life requires grace) and therefore in general language, this is supernatural; but it is called natural because the soul is in an active state, and acts with the help of ordinary graces. *Supernatural* recollection is that which God Himself works by means of extraordinary grace which places the soul in a passive state. Thus supernatural or infused recollection takes place when the faculties of the soul are recollected by no human effort, but by the light which God sheds, and which kindles a powerful and active love within it. When in this state, the soul should do nothing to interrupt this calm intercourse inspired by a precious truth; neither should it weary itself to reflect upon particular points, such as its unworthiness, or its own resolutions; it should not even seek to know what recollection is: its great duty is to let itself be led, whether to the consideration of verities, or to form such as God may incline it to.

CCLXXV. The second step is *repose*. In recol- Repose, the

2nd de-
gree.

lection, the power of love is directly communicated to the exterior senses, which are constrained by God Himself to recollect themselves within the soul. In repose, love is directly communicated to the mind, within the soul; love is more ardent, and makes the senses themselves feel it; but this does not always occur. S. Theresa says that in this meditation all the faculties of the soul are not suspended; the will is bound, because it can love nothing save God Who draws it to Himself, but the understanding, the memory and the imagination are free, and wander at large. Therefore, the Saint says, the soul should not be uneasy about it, but smile at its thoughts, consider them as foolish, and remain in repose; the will being supreme, it can recall them without an aid. In fact, if the soul persists in recollecting its thoughts, it will gain nothing, but will lose its repose. In this state, still more than in recollection, the soul should not strive to form resolutions or other self-chosen acts, but content itself with making those to which it is gently drawn by God Himself.

Prayer of
pure con-
templa-
tion.

CCLXXVI. Let us now turn to the prayer of pure contemplation, that is to say, of the negative contemplation already mentioned, which is more perfect than the affirmative. This negative contemplation is called *bright obscurity*, (*claire obscurité*), because the abundance of light clouds the vision. Just as one who looks at the sun is dazzled by its splendour and sees nothing, but knows that the sun is a great centre of light; so, in this obscurity, God communicates an abundant light to the soul, which does not make it appreciate any individual truth, but conveys

a general, undefined impression of the Infinite Goodness; the result of which is, that the soul forms an undefined idea of God, yet a very perfect one. When a soul knows some one of God's perfections, though faintly, it has some notion of His Goodness; but that notion is much greater when it realises that perfection is incomprehensible. Cardinal Petrucci in his admirable letters says that this prayer of obscurity is so called, because in this life the soul is incapable of seeing the Divinity clearly, so that even in this state it sees without seeing, only it sees better thus than by any other means. It does not know or see the Divinity clearly; because, inasmuch as God cannot be figured by any form or representation, the understanding cannot form a complete idea of Him, and thus it only realises that it cannot realise. For this reason S. Denis the Areopagite calls this intelligence "the sublime knowledge of God through ignorance." In this prayer of obscurity, all the interior powers of the soul are suspended, and often even the exterior senses; so that at times the soul enters upon a spiritual intoxication which manifests itself by the acts of delirious love, such as singing, cries, abundant tears, springs, and similar expressions, as used to occur to S. Maddalena de Pazzi.

CCLXXVII. Having led the soul up these different steps, the Lord brings it at last to union. The sole aim of the soul ought to be union with God. But in order to salvation, it is not necessary to attain *passive* union: the *active* union will suffice. S. Theresa observes that God does not lead all souls by supernatural paths; indeed there are but few that He so conducts. We shall find many in Heaven

The prayer
of a soul
in union
with God.

who, without having received any of these extraordinary graces, will be more glorious than those who have received them. *Active* union is perfect conformity to the Will of God; in that doubtless consists the whole perfection of divine Love. "Perfection," says S. Theresa, "does not consist in extasy, but the true union of the soul with God is the union of one's own will with the Divine Will." This union is necessary; not so the passive union. "Those souls which only enjoy the active union," says S. Theresa again, "may have much greater merit, since it is the result of their efforts: the Lord treats them as vigorous souls to whom He intends to give hereafter all of which He deprives them now." Cardinal Petrucci says that through infused contemplation the soul may easily succeed, with the aid of ordinary grace, in rooting out its own will, and transform it in God, by simply willing that which He wills. The passions which work within the soul do not hinder its transformation in God. Inasmuch then, as therein consists all holiness, the soul need not desire or seek anything else, than that God should lead it, and work His Will in it. That great teacher of prayer, S. Theresa, says that in the *passive* union, the soul neither sees, feels, or perceives its state, because the abundance of light and love create that blessed obscurity which suspends all the faculties of the soul. The memory remembers nothing save God; the will is so wholly united to God, that it cannot love aught else; and the understanding is so filled with light, that it cannot think of anything besides, not even of the grace it enjoys, so that it conceives, but without comprehending. In a word, the soul that is

in this state, possesses a clear experimental knowledge of the Presence of God, Who unites it closely to Himself. S. Theresa says that this union “rarely lasts, at the longest for half an hour.” In the other contemplations of which we have spoken, God makes Himself known as near; but here He is Present, and the soul has the exquisite consciousness of its union with Him. For this reason, says S. Theresa, though in other contemplations the soul may doubt if it is God, here there can be no such doubt. But equally, the confessor should warn the person who experiences it, that he is not therefore incapable of sin; rather that the more favoured he is, the more humble and detached he should be, the more he should love the Cross, conform himself to God’s Will, justly fearing lest his unfaithfulness should be henceforth more severely punished by reason of his ingratitude. S. Theresa says that she knew several persons who had attained this state of union, and who afterwards fell miserably under God’s displeasure.

CCLXXVIII. There are three kinds of union: *simple* union; union of *betrothal*; and *consummated* union, which is called spiritual marriage. So far we have been speaking of *simple* union. We will now explain the union of *betrothal*. The Lord generally causes substantial dryness, of which I spoke above, to precede this union, thereby purifying the mind. In this union we can distinguish three degrees;—*exstasy*, *ravishment*, and the flight of the mind or spirit. In *simple* union the faculties of the soul are suspended, but not so the bodily senses, although they become almost powerless. In *exstasy* the use of the senses is lost too, so that one neither

Of three
kinds of
union.

sees, hears nor feels. *Ravishment* is a still stronger action of grace, by which the Lord not only raises the soul into union with Himself, but also so ravishes it by a sudden and violent impulse, that the body itself may be lifted from the earth, and become as light as a feather. The flight of the spirit takes place, when the soul feels as though transported from the body and carried powerfully above itself, whereat, in the beginning, it is greatly terrified. Thus in this flight of the spirit both exstasy and ravishment are included. A person who was favoured with such grace, told me that his soul seemed to be rent from his body, and carried with such power that it appeared to go a million of miles in an instant, and that with great terror, not knowing where it was to stop; but stopping suddenly, was surrounded by light which enabled it to penetrate some Divine secret. It has been asked, If the faculties are suspended and the understanding dazzled by light in this union to such a point as to be unable to reflect upon what it sees, how can the soul receive and repeat this Divine secret? The writer answers that when God wills to explain a secret or shew a vision to a soul, He diminishes His Light, so that the soul may retain the power of apprehending and remembering what He wills to teach it.

Consum-
mated
union.

CCLXXIX. *Consummated* union is the most perfect; the closest which the Saviour can grant here below to pilgrim souls. It is called *spiritual marriage*. The soul is herein transformed into God, and becomes one with Him, as a vessel of water placed in the sea becomes one with the sea. In the other unions, the faculties are suspended; it is not so here,

because the faculties, being purified from whatever is material and earthly, become fit for divine union. Thus the will loves God with supreme bliss, and the understanding comprehends and dwells upon this intimate union. It is as though one were able to gaze upon the sun without being dazzled by its splendour. This union is not temporary like the other: it is lasting, so that the soul habitually enjoys the most perfect peace in the Presence of God, with Whom it is united. It is no longer troubled by passions; it sees them appear, but without distress; as one who was placed above the clouds would watch storms in the lower regions, without feeling their effects.

CCLXXX. It will be useful to say something of *Visions*. visions, colloquies and revelations, in order to discern the true from the false. Among visions, some are external, some imaginary, some intellectual. External visions are such as the eyes behold; imaginary, such as take place in the imagination; intellectual visions are not seen either with the eyes or the imagination, but by the understanding, through divine light which supplies the objects. S. Theresa says this sort of vision is altogether spiritual; the external senses have no share in it, any more than the interior senses, such as the imagination. It must be observed, that with the eyes or the imagination the soul can only see objects under a corporeal form, even were they spiritual substances. On the contrary, through the understanding, even material things are seen as if they were spiritual: or, to speak more correctly, they are recognised without being seen; and that, even more perfectly than if they were seen with bodily eyes.

Real and
spurious
visions.

CCLXXXI. It is necessary to know whether these visions come from God or from the devil, and also those of the intellect, according to S. John of the Cross, who therein differs from Cardinal Petrucci. But corporeal visions are most subject to illusion, and most frequently they are the effect of imagination, especially in women. The signs by which we may distinguish those which are real from the false, are ; 1) if they come suddenly, and without the soul thinking about them. 2) If they begin by causing trouble and fear, and end by leaving the soul at peace. 3) If they are rare ; for those which recur constantly are suspicious. 4) If they last but a short time. S. Theresa says that when the soul gazes long at the object presented to it, it is a sign that the vision is the result of imagination ; more frequently a divine vision passes like lightning, but leaves a deep impression on the soul. 5) A true vision leaves perfect peace in the soul, together with a lively perception of its own misery and a strong desire for perfection : very different from satanic visions, which only produce fleeting impressions and leave dryness, disquiet, feelings of self-esteem and a material liking for such graces, in the soul. But even all these signs are not entirely certain, S. Theresa says. The devil will often feign a repose, humble thoughts, longings after perfection, which it is not easy to trace to him ; all which he does, in order to win confidence, and then lead the soul into some snare. For this reason a director ought not to forbid his penitents to repeat such visions, but rather require them to do so ; while still he ought not to seem inquisitive about them, or re-

quire details, or put leading questions, which expose the penitent to a risk of answering untruly, either out of ignorance, or intentionally. If the confessor sees plainly, that such visions are the effect of imagination or the work of the enemy, inasmuch as they diminish the penitent's obedience, humility, or other virtues, then he should say so unhesitatingly. If he does not know whence they come, he should not decide hastily; but tell the penitent to pray that God will remove from him such dangers, inasmuch as he only desires to know Him by faith. But, all the same, teach such a person to learn one lesson from these visions, whether they be true or false. That is lesson, to be more faithful to God—so that if the devil is their author, the penitent will not be a victim to his delusions.

CCLXXXII. Colloquies may be *successive*, *formal*, *Colloquies.* and *substantial*. The *successive* colloquy takes place, when the soul, meditating on some verity of the Faith, hears an answer within its mind, as though some other person were speaking. If the result is extraordinary love or humility, it may be a special light from God; but otherwise it probably is only the natural mind. *Formal* colloquy is, when the soul hears certain distinct words, but from without. They may be heard with the ears, the imagination or the understanding. The way to know whether such colloquy be from God or the devil, is to examine what it expresses or enjoins, and what effects ensue. If it comes from God, and if it enjoins acts of patience, spirituality or self-abnegation, it will impart a great readiness for suffering, for work and for humiliation. *Substantial* colloquy is the same

as formal, only different in the effect: formal colloquy instructs or commands; substantial colloquy works out what it expresses instantly; e. g. if it says, "Be comforted; do not fear; love Me;" at that moment the soul is comforted, reassured, kindled. This colloquy is more to be trusted than the other, which is very uncertain; and even very suspicious, when it orders certain things. If they are opposed to Christian prudence, the confessor should wholly forbid them; if not, it is still advisable to delay their execution, until greater certainty can be obtained, especially if they are at all out of the common.

Revela-
tions.

CCLXXXIII. As to revelations of hidden or future things, such for instance, as the mysteries of the Faith, the state of consciences, predestination of departed souls, elevation of dignitaries, and such like, they may occur in three ways; by vision, colloquy, or a plain sight of the truth. You should be very slow to believe in these revelations, and still slower in permitting actions to be founded upon them. Above all, forbid the person who experiences them to talk about it. Be very cautious in the matter; for such meditations are generally doubtful or suspicious. Clear views of the mysteries or attributes of God, the heinousness of sin, the misery of the lost, and similar things, are less suspicious. S. John of the Cross says, that if they are consistent with the Faith, the soul should not seek or reject them, but receive them with humility, if they are sent.

How these
superna-
tural

CCLXXXIV. Ought one to reject or accept all these graces and supernatural communications? We

must distinguish between them; as say S. John of the Cross and other learned authorities. Every sort of vision which is contrary to the faith, should be absolutely rejected; but such as are consistent with the faith, and unite the soul to God, should not be rejected, and may even be humbly sought after, in order to approach more closely to God, and to be strengthened in His love. I speak here of souls already used to receive such graces: for others it is a better and safer way only to seek active union, that is, the union of their will with the Will of God. If then a soul comes to you with its communications of contemplation, do not desire him to reject them, but to receive them humbly and thankfully. Never by your words give him full assurance, but keep him in a certain state of fear which may keep him humble and detached, without being uneasy. As to distinct knowledge by the means of visions or otherwise, you should bid him positively reject such; protesting his intention of serving God in pure faith. S. Theresa says, that whenever the soul in meditation feels itself softly kindled with love of God, it may believe that to be a Divine communication, not esteeming itself better than others, but in order to aim at greater perfection, so that if it should be a snare of the devil, he may be taken in his own wiles, and be discomfited.

CCLXXXV. In conclusion; 1) You will make your penitents tell you of any communications they may have received in prayer, without being inquisitive concerning them. Do not tell them to any third person, which might cause vanity in the penitent, or lead to scandal. 2) Do not betray any

special esteem for such a privileged soul : above all, never refer any of your other penitents to such an one for advice or direction, but rather show a preference for those who simply tread the paths of faith. Such privileged souls should be strictly kept within the bounds of great humility. 3) If you see that such a person continues to be humble and timid under these communications, you should assist him, and even sometimes assure them that they are not under a delusion, if it seems advisable. S. Theresa says that the soul will never do great things for God, unless it is conscious of having received great graces from Him ; and there can be no doubt that special favours tend greatly to kindle love. Look at S. Theresa herself ; no sooner had S. Francis Borgia and S. Peter d' Alcantara satisfied her that the gifts she received came from God, than she made great strides in holiness. Even if from time to time such a person is betrayed into some fault, if it is not a deliberate or cherished fault, do not therefore conclude that all spiritual communications he may receive are necessarily snares and delusions. The Lord sometimes vouchsafes supernatural gifts, not to the perfect only, but to the imperfect, in order to free them from their imperfections and raise them to a more perfect life. If then you see that your penitent is more free from his passions, and advancing in Divine Love and a longing after perfection, be sure that is a sign that his supernatural communications are from God. But as to external visions and the like, shew him that you do not think much of them. Remember what S. Theresa said after her death to one of her nuns ; "Do not let souls rest

on visions and revelations, or imagine therein to find perfection; there are some that are true doubtless, but many are false and delusive, and it is difficult to distinguish one truth among many falsehoods. The more people seek and value them, the more they will quit God's own established path, which is the surest; that of faith and humility." Tell such a penitent to ask true exstasy of God; i. e. complete detachment from all that belongs to the world or to himself; without which he will hardly be saved. It is especially a bad sign, if you see that he is not well acquainted with the depths of his own wretchedness, that he is disposed to regard his visions as certainly coming from God, and that he is troubled if you doubt it. It is a sign rather that these visions are a work of the devil; which pride and a timorous will may prove hereafter; or that his soul is not on a right road. At all events he ought to be doubtful, when his confessor doubts: and therefore you should try to inspire him with as much humility and fear as is possible. If he does not submit, deal sharply with him, and deprive him of Communion; for he is in danger of being deceived by the devil. If on the other hand you feel justified in assuring a penitent that his communications come from God, exhort him nevertheless always in his meditation to take some point of the life or Passion of our Lord. "If the soul ceases to be led by Jesus," says S. Theresa, "it will never attain to perfect union with God. Beginners meditate on the Passion by reasoning upon it; Contemplatives leave reasoning alone, but gazing upon a mystery, they admire the Divine beauty, mercy and love; and

thence God raises them in His own good time, to the contemplation of His Divinity Itself."

ARTICLE IV.

Concerning Good Works.

Mortifica-
tion.

CCLXXXVI. With respect to mortification ; when souls first give themselves up to God, He generally leads them on by means of sensible consolations ; and in this first fervour they are disposed to kill themselves with bodily mortifications ; disciplines, hair-shirts, fasts, &c. You should be very strict about allowing such mortifications ; for, the moment that dryness sets in, as it will assuredly do, it is to be feared that the soul, deprived of its sensible fervour, will throw aside all mortifications, and falling into discouragement it may even leave off prayer and religion itself, as things beyond it, and thus lose every thing. This eagerness sometimes leads people to indiscretions which cause illness, and then they give up all their spiritual exercises to get well, and perhaps never resume them. Your first aim should be to stablish your penitents in the spiritual life ; and then according to their health, occupations and character, you can allow them to practise certain bodily mortifications ; but in all this you must exercise a Christian prudence. Some directors seem to think that the progress of a soul depends upon subjecting it to the severest bodily mortifications ; while others appear to reject all external mortification as

useless toward spiritual progress, saying that perfection consists wholly in interior mortification; but they are mistaken. Bodily mortification assists interior mortification, and is to a certain extent necessary, where it can be used, to restrain the passions. All the Saints have made use of it, more or less. No doubt interior mortification is the first point to attain; as, for instance, not answering again, saying nothing to our own advantage, yielding in disputes, giving way to the will of others when it can be done without spiritual harm. To this end it is well sometimes to forbid all external mortifications, until a penitent has conquered some dominant passion, such as vanity, bitterness, self-interest, self-conceit, or self-will. But it is a great mistake to say that external mortification is of little or no good. S. John of the Cross used to say, "Do not believe anyone who disapproves of penances, though he have the gift of miracles."

CCLXXXVII. From the outset you should forbid the penitent to do anything without or contrary to your orders. "Those who perform penances contrary to obedience," says S. John of the Cross, "are more likely to make progress in vice than in virtue." Be very cautious about bodily mortifications, even when your penitent presses for them; you can gradually permit them to increase, as his soul becomes more confirmed in good ways. But as a rule, only employ them when they are urged upon you, as these things avail little unless they are fervently used; and always give less than is asked. Especially teach mortification as to food. Some pious people pay little attention to this, though really it

Penances
are not to
be under-
taken save
under
obedience.

is the hardest and often the most useful to the soul and body. S. Philip Neri used to say that without it no one could reach perfection. On the contrary, be very slow to allow any retrenchment of needful sleep, which often is injurious to bodily and spiritual health. If people do not have enough sleep, their head will suffer, and they will become incapable of meditation and other devotional exercises. But whatever mortifications you allow to be used, always keep down pride by reminding your penitent that they are nothing to what the saints have practised, or to the Sufferings our Saviour bore for love of us. "All that we can ever do," says S. Theresa, "is as nothing when weighed against one single drop of the Blood He shed for us."

The most useful and least dangerous mortifications are negative; and they need not be performed out of obedience; e. g. depriving oneself of seeing or hearing curious things; talking little; being satisfied with food which we do not like; abstaining from warming oneself in winter; selecting the worst things for ourselves; willingly going without something one wants; in such things as these, S. Bernard says, the virtue of poverty is found: "*Virtus paupertatis non est paupertas, sed amor paupertatis*;" not complaining of the weather, of contempt, persecution, inconveniences or infirmities. It is with the chisel of endurance that the stones of the Heavenly Jerusalem are shaped. S. Theresa says, "It is madness to suppose that God chooses those for His friends who love their ease; souls that really love Him cannot seek for rest here."

Public and CCLXXXVIII. Here there arises a question : Our

Lord says, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven;" and elsewhere He said, "When ye give alms, let not your right hand know what your left hand doeth." And so people ask, are good works to be hidden or made known? I should say let ordinary good works, such as are necessary to holiness, be seen publicly; frequenting the Sacraments, meditation, devotion and recollection in Church, modesty of manner, avoiding gossip, doubtful conversation, curiosity and the like, and showing an earnest desire to attain to salvation. As to works of extraordinary supererogation, which are remarkable, they ought to be kept as secret as possible. Other works such as nursing the sick, giving alms, bearing injury meekly &c, are better concealed as far as may be; but if they must inevitably be seen, there is no reason to abstain from them, but rather do them solely with a view to please God.

CCLXXXIX. With respect to frequenting the Sacrament of Penance and the Eucharist; if a penitent has never made a general Confession, it is well to move him to do so; if it has been made, and he is tormented with scruples, you should forbid it him. As to ordinary confession, P. Barisoni in his Treatise on Communion, says that if people have been guilty of some venial fault, and have no means of confession, they need not therefore deprive themselves of the Holy Eucharist, an opinion which he confirms by the authority of S. Ambrose and others; and S. F. de Sales gives similar advice in one of his Letters. Indeed the Council of Trent teaches that

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venial sins may be remitted by other means, such as acts of contrition and charity, and it is better to purify oneself with these for any such faults when one has no Confessor, than to deprive oneself of Communion. A wise director has said that it is sometimes even more useful to a soul to prepare itself for communion by fervent acts of repentance, humility and confidence, than by confession.

As to Com-
munion.

CCXC. It is not necessary to dwell here upon the obligation of pastors not to refuse the Holy Eucharist to any who ask it rightly, and who are not notable sinners. Innocent XI. ordered that the frequency of Communion should be left entirely to the judgment of the individual Confessor. Among these some err from over-indulgence, some from excessive strictness. It is evidently wrong, (as Benedict XIV. sets forth in his "De Synodos") to allow frequent Communion to those persons who repeatedly fall into mortal sin, and take no pains to repent and correct themselves; or who approach the Holy Table while still clinging to deliberate venial sins. But there are times when it is useful to allow those who are in danger of mortal sin to communicate, so as to give them strength for resistance. To others who go on in a state of deliberate venial sin, without amendment or sign of seeking it, I should only allow a weekly Communion; and at times it may be well to forbid them to receive for a week, in order to move them to greater sorrow for their faults and to a more true reverence for the Holy Sacrament.

CCXCI. But there can be no doubt that those Confessors who indiscriminately refuse frequent Communion, without regard to the wants of individual

souls, merely because it *is* frequent, are altogether contrary to the spirit of the Church. The Roman Catechism, explaining the order of the Council of Trent, that all who assist at Mass should communicate, teaches that parish Priests ought zealously to inculcate, not only frequent, but daily Communion, upon the faithful, inasmuch as the soul, like the body, needs daily sustenance. I will not quote authorities, they abound in all works upon frequent Communion. Suffice it, that frequent and even daily Communion has always been approved by the Church and the Fathers, who have made great efforts to rekindle a fervour for it, when it has been languishing. The 3rd. Council of Milan under S. Charles, ordered all parish Priests to exhort the faithful to this frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist, forbidding the opposite doctrine, and desiring Bishops to rebuke such of their Clergy as should teach it, as giving cause for scandal and contradicting the Church's teaching. Innocent XI. ordered all bishops to give heed that daily Communion was refused to no one, and to promote this devotion to their utmost in their dioceses. There are some rigorists who grant the lawfulness of daily Communion, but they say, there must be the necessary dispositions to receive. What do they mean by necessary dispositions? If they mean that we are to be worthy to receive, who would ever communicate? Jesus Christ Alone was ever worthy of it, since only God could be worthy to receive God. Perhaps they mean suitable dispositions? As I have said, it is right to refuse frequent Communion to those who yield to their venial faults without seeking to correct them; but in the case of per-

sons who have struggled against venial sins, and conquered most of their evil inclinations, and who desire to communicate, S. Francis de Sales decides, that their Confessors may well allow them to communicate daily. S. Thomas says that when any one perceives that Communion increases his love of God without lessening his reverence for the Sacrament, he may be allowed daily Communion: "*Si aliquis experientia comperisset ex quotidiana communione augeri amoris fervorem et non minui reverentiam, talis deberet quotidie communicare.*"

CCXCII. There is a benefit in abstaining from Communion, at certain times, out of reverence; but, as says P. Louis of Grenada in his Treatise on Communion, it is a generally received opinion that it is better to approach the B. Sacrament daily out of love, than to abstain out of reverence. And S. Thomas says; "*Et ideo utrumque pertinet ad reverentiam hujus Sacramenti, et quod quotidie sumatur et quod aliquando abstinenceatur... Amor tamen et spes, ad quem semper Scriptura nos provocat, præferuntur timori.*" Barisoni says that, communicating with the desire to grow in Divine Love, we make an act of reverence to Jesus Christ, which act is positive, whereas in abstaining we only make a negative act. Certainly many of the saints who were filled with the most intense reverence for the B. Sacrament, did not abstain from daily Communion; S. Gertrude, S. Catherine of Sienna, S. Theresa, S. Chantale, and many more. Do you say that we have none such in these days? I would answer with Barisoni, that we ought not to presume to say that the Arm of the Lord is shortened. Avila goes so far as to say that those

who blame daily Communion, are doing the devil's work.

CCXCIII. We may conclude then that a Confessor can hardly refuse frequent, or even daily Communion to one who seeks to grow in Divine Love, and to forsake venial sin; who prays and meditates diligently. Some wise directors think it desirable to enjoin abstinence on some one day in the week, as well as occasionally to deprive their penitents of Communion either to prove their obedience and humility or for some other good reason. Innocent XI. says: "Frequens (ad Eucharistiam) accessus confessoriorum iudicio est relinquendus, qui ex conscientiarum puritate, et frequentię fructu, et ad pietatem processu, laicis negotiatoribus et conjugatis, quod prospiciunt eorum saluti profuturum, id illis præscribere debebunt." Wise direction.

CCXCIV. Even when a person falls occasionally through frailty into some voluntary venial sin, of which he immediately repents, and intends amendment, we have no right to refuse communion to him, if he desires it in order to gain strength to go on towards perfection. Alexander VII. condemned a proposition of Baius which says, "Sacrilegi sunt iudicandi qui jus ad communionem percipiendam prætendunt, antequam de delictis suis pœnitentiam egerint?" and, "Similiter arcendi sunt a sacra Communionem, quibus nondum inest amor Dei purissimus, et omnis mixtionis expers." The Council of Trent calls the Blessed Sacrament, "antidotum quo liberamur a culpis quotidianis, et a peccatis mortalibus præservamur." It was no doubt in order to preserve the faithful from falling, that the Apostles allowed

them to receive the B. Sacrament daily ; many among them probably being subject to the same infirmities as the faithful in our own times, judging by the writings of S. Paul and S. James. In the Post-communion for the 23rd. Sunday after Pentecost, the Church prays, " Ut quidquid in nostra mente vitiosum est, dono medicationis hujus sacramenti curetur." Therefore communion is for the imperfect likewise, in order that their weaknesses may be healed through its strength. In the Introduction to the Devout Life, S. F. de Sales thus speaks of frequent Communion ; " If you are asked why you receive so often, answer that there are two classes of people who need frequent communion, the perfect and the imperfect ; the first, that they may preserve their perfection ; the second, that they may attain to it : the strong, so that they may not become weak ; and the weak, in order to become strong : the sick, that they may be cured, and the whole, that they may keep their health. As for you who are imperfect, sick and weak, you need frequent Communion. Say also that those who are not entangled with the affairs of this world should communicate frequently, because they have the power to do so ; and those who are cumbered with business have all the more need of communion." S. Francis concludes thus, " Do you then receive, as often as your spiritual father will permit, and believe me, that even as our mountain hares grow white, because they live upon the snow ; so you, feeding on this most pure Sacrament will become all pure within." P. de Grenada, in his treatise on Communion, uses the same language. " Our own wretchedness ought not to keep

us from this Sacrament, since it has been given as riches for the poor, and as a remedy for the sick. Therefore however great his imperfection, let none who sincerely desires to amend abstain from this remedy." He says again, "the weaker a man feels himself to be, the more eagerly he should seek this strength-giving Bread." And S. Ambrose, "Qui semper pecco, debeo semper habere medicinam;" and S. Augustine: "Quotidie peccas, quotidie sume."

CCXCV. S. Thomas teaches that the effect of the Sacrament, as regards increase of grace, is not hindered by venial sins, so long as they are not committed while actually receiving the Communion. Of course they hinder the effect of the Sacrament to a certain degree, but not wholly. Such is the opinion of Soto, Suarez, Valentino, Vazquez, Coninck, and many others, following the Salamanca doctors. Many good authorities say that this Sacrament remits in itself "ex opere operato" venial sins, to which the soul has no present attraction; and this agrees with the Roman Catechism; "Remitti vero Eucharistia et condonari leviora, quæ venialia dici solent, non est quod dubitari debeat. Quidquid enim cupiditatis ardore anima amisit, totum Eucharistia, eas minores culpas abstergens, restituit." At all events, as the Angelical Doctor says, "Qui [actus charitatis] excitatur in hoc sacramento, per quem peccata venialia solvuntur."

Effects of
commu-
nicating.

CCXCVI. If you find that a soul does not advance towards perfection by frequent Communion, and does not correct venial but deliberate faults, such e. g. as indulgence of the senses in eating, in words and looks, in vain dress &c. it would cer-

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tainly be a matter of prudence to restrict the Communion of such an one, if only to make him more watchful. But always bear in mind that although it is necessary to communicate, as says S. Thomas, "ut cum magna devotione accedat;" it is not necessary that this devotion be "summa," or evidently seen. If you see that your penitent has a firm and steadfast desire to please God in all things, that is enough. Else, as Gerson says, to abstain from Communion, because one has not sufficient fervour, is as though one who was shivering with cold refused to approach the fire. And P. de Grenada observes, that those timid persons who cease to communicate from an excessive sense of their own unworthiness, therein grievously hinder their own spiritual progress. S. Justinian says, that it is not necessary to constant Communion, for the soul to be conscious of an increase of fervour, as this Sacrament sometimes works within us, though we may be unconscious of it. S. Bonaventura says: "Licet tepide, tamen confidens de misericordia Dei fiducialiter accedas, quia qui se indignum reputat, cogitet, quod tanto magis eget medico, quanto senseri se ægrotum. Neque ideo quæris te jungere Christo, ut tu eum sanctifices, sed ut tu sanctificeris ab illo. ...Neque prætermittenda est sancta Communio, siquandoque non sentit homo specialem devotionem, cum se ad illam præparare studeat, vel in ipsa perceptione, vel post forte minus devotum se sentit, quam vellet." According to this Saint, one should not abstain from Communion, even if one's devotion seemed to be less instead of greater, after it. And as it is sometimes well when a soul

is drawn to Communion, to mortify it by refusing it, especially if that delay disquiets it, because such disquiet is a proof of pride, which makes it unworthy of It; so it is well occasionally to make persons who are feeling dry and without attraction to Communion, receive more frequently, in order that they may gain fresh warmth.

CCXCVII. Would to God, I would say in conclusion, that there were many of those souls, whom certain rigorists call irreverent and rash; who, detesting even trifling faults, wish to communicate often, or even daily, with a true desire to correct themselves, and to advance in Divine Love! Jesus Christ would be certainly much more loved on earth than He is now! Experience teaches all who are concerned in the direction of souls, as I have myself seen, that such persons as these, who come to the holy Altar animated by an earnest desire, benefit greatly by so doing; and the Saviour draws them to Himself, although in a wonderful way He does not give them any knowledge of it, but leaves them in desolation and darkness without any sensible consolation. To such as these, there is no more powerful assistance than frequent Communion. Whenever then you find a true desire for Communion, and see that it forwards the progress of the Communicant, encourage him to receive frequently; advise him to give all the time he can to thanksgiving. Few Confessors think of this, because few Priests are at pains to thank Jesus Christ after their own celebration: they would be ashamed to recommend to others what they do not do themselves. The thanksgiving should ordina-

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rily occupy an hour; or at least half an hour, spent in prayers and affections. S. Theresa says that after Communion the Saviour dwells in our hearts as on a Throne of Mercy to pour out His graces on us; saying tenderly to us, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Elsewhere she says, "Give good heed not to lose the precious opportunity of enriching yourself after Communion: His Majesty is wont to pay a noble price for a good lodging." Teach your penitents also to make frequent spiritual communion. The Council of Trent sets great store by it. "Spiritual communion," says S. Theresa, "is most profitable; do not neglect it, for by that will the Saviour judge the measure of your love for Him."

Rule for
the religi-
ous who
desire
perfection.

CCXCVIII. With respect to the rule for a Religious, supposing that there are no hindrances arising from health, occupation, or obedience; and that her spiritual Father, and even the Superioress of the Convent, approve, as regards external mortifications which the community might observe; I should say, 1) that she might take three hours at least for meditation; one in the morning, one at night, and one after communion. During these prayers she will carefully renew her vows, several times a day. 2) I should advise but few vocal prayers; if they are numerous, the head grows weary, they become a hindrance, and little spiritual fruit is gained by them; but 3) she should use frequent ejaculatory prayers. Such as; *My God and my all! My God, how good Thou art! I love Thee, O my Jesus, Who didst die for me. Lord, why do not all men love Thee? O if I had never offended Thee; I will, all that Thou wilt. When*

shall I love Thee? when shall I see Thee face to face? Do with me whatsoever Thou wilt. Recommend earnestly these darts of love, and bid her prize them greatly: half an hour's spiritual reading in Rodriguez or Saint Jure or the Lives of the Saints. For communion, daily; one day in the week excepted, save during the octaves of Pentecost, Christmas &c. and spiritual communion three times a day at least. 4) For mortifications; the discipline for about a quarter of an hour a day. Forbid hair-cloth; for it much injures health. 5) Never to eat between meals. 6) To limit sleep, yet not below five hours*, less sleep makes the head sick, and hinders exercises of piety. 7) To keep silence for three hours each day, i. e., abstain from every unnecessary speech.

CCXCIX. 1. Put your whole trust in God, and wholly mistrust yourself and your own good resolutions; seek a strong will of selfmastery, and aim at conquering self in all things. "If the fault does not lie with us, never fear," says S. Theresa, "that God will fail to give us all graces necessary to our sanctification!"

General rules for those aiming at perfection.

2. Avoid all deliberate sin, however trifling. "It is through little things that the devil makes breaches whereby great things gain entrance." "God preserve you," says the same saint, "from any deliberate sin, though the least conceivable."

3. Do not be disquieted about your faults; humble yourself directly, offering an act of contrition and good resolution to God, and then be calm: do

* Even this would probably be too little, for the most part in our Northern climate. Ed.

this even if you fall a hundred times a day. S. Theresa says we should not talk about our temptations with other imperfect souls, as thereby we hurt ourselves and them.

4. Seek detachment from all things; friends, property, pleasures; else the love of the world will soon draw you from the road to Heaven. Avoid familiarity with persons of a different sex, although they be pious, the devil sometimes insinuates into the heart, under the veil of spiritual affections, attachments, which are not pure. Above all seek detachment from your own esteem and your own will; even in spiritual matters, such as prayer, communion or mortification, be ruled by obedience. In a word, let nothing reign in your heart save God and that which is His Holy will.

5. Be willing to be despised, laughed at, and little esteemed. How well that soul meditates, who can thankfully accept contempt! This is a most necessary virtue, in communities especially. Seek too to love your enemies and persecutors; serve them gladly, give them all honour, and above all, pray for them; such has been the wont of all Saints.

6. Seek the love of God and to please Him with all your heart. S. Theresa says that God "accepts our wishes as much as if they were realised." No soul can make progress in perfection without this desire, nor can hope to obtain any special grace from God. "He generally grants His special favours to those only who ardently desire His holy love." To this desire we must join steadfast resolution to do every thing in our power to please God. "The devil

is very much afraid of good resolutions," says S. Theresa, "and the Lord only requires a steadfast resolution on our part, to be ready to do all the rest." You must also cultivate a great love for meditation and prayer; this is the furnace which kindles divine love; all the saints have delighted in prayer, because they were all kindled with that love. Add to this an earnest longing after Paradise, because there we shall love God with an intensity which we can never attain on earth; and therefore He wills us to long passionately for the Kingdom which our Saviour purchased for us with His Blood.

7. Seek to possess entire conformity to the will of God in all that contradicts your own wishes; and often through the day, offer yourself to Him; S. Theresa used to do this fifty times a day. "Progress does not consist in a greater enjoyment of His love," she used to say, "but in doing His will . . True union, is union of our will with that of God."

8. Study to be perfectly obedient to your spiritual father, your rules, or your superiors. "Obedience," says F. Vincent Caraffa, "is the queen of virtues, inasmuch as all virtues obey obedience." And S. Theresa says, "God asks of the soul which loves Him nought save obedience." Now perfect obedience implies prompt, punctual, willing, unquestioning obedience, unless the thing commanded be evident sin. Such is the doctrine taught by S. Bernard, S. Francis de Sales, S. Ignatius, and all the teachers of the Spiritual life. In doubtful cases, always do what you believe obedience would

dictate, and when there is no guide, then do that which is least according to your taste. This is the "Vince te ipsum," so earnestly inculcated by S. Francis Xavier and S. Ignatius, who used to say that a mortified soul profited more in one quarter of an hour's prayer than an unmortified soul in several hours.

9. Live in the continual presence of God. "All sin comes," said S. Theresa, "from our forgetting His Presence." Those who love truly never forget the object of their love. It is well to have some memorial of this Sacred Presence about us, and in our chamber; but above all we should keep it alive in our hearts by frequent acts of love throughout the day, often raising the soul in brief prayers; "Jesus, My Love, my All; I love Thee with my whole heart; I give myself wholly to Thee, do with me whatever Thou wilt. I will nothing save Thee and Thy Holy Will. Give me Thy love, and it sufficeth me, &c." These acts should be made without effort or constraint; not seeking sensible consolation therein, but with love and sincerity, and simply with a view to please God. S. Theresa said, "Never fear that God will leave one loving glance up to Him unrewarded."

10. Strive to have an habitual intention of pleasing God in whatever you do, spiritual or temporal, saying, "Lord, I do this for Thee." Such good intentions have been called the soul's philosopher's stone, which turns every action, even the most insignificant, into gold.

11. Perform Spiritual exercises at least on eight days, every year; separating yourself as far as pos-

sible from all occupation or intercourse which in any way distracts you from God Alone. Take one day in each month for a similar retreat.

Keep with special devotion the Octaves of Christmas and Pentecost. In these octaves you can communicate daily: an hour or at least half an hour of Orison; use some, but few vocal prayers. One will gain more by a fixed number of acts of love and other virtues.

Do all to the glory of God. Such are the best means of attaining perfection; but the crowning point of all, is Orison.

CCC. Earth is sin-stained, and hell crowded with lost souls, because men will not remember the Eternal Truths. "Desolatione desolata est omnis terra, quia nullus est qui recogitet corde." Contrariwise the Holy Spirit tells us that he who often thinks upon death, judgment and eternity, will not fall into sin; "Memorare novissima tua, et in æternum non peccabis." It has been said that, could we ask the lost wherefore they are in Hell? the greater part would answer, "We are in hell, because we never thought of hell." S. Vincent de Paul used to say that it would be almost a miracle, if a sinner could assist at a mission or a retreat and not be converted. Now in mental prayer, God Himself speaks to the soul: "Ducam eam in solitudinem, et loquar ad cor ejus;" and assuredly God speaks more powerfully than any preacher. It was through mental prayer that all the Saints were sanctified. Experience shows that those who habitually use mental prayer rarely fall into mortal sin; or if unhappily they should so

How to
make
Orison.

fall, by the help of it they rise quickly from it and return to God. Mental prayer and mortal sin are incompatible things. A holy man used to say, that men might go on reciting rosaries and offices, and fasting, and yet continue in sin; but that no one who persevered in mental prayer could live in enmity to God; either he would forsake orison, or he would forsake sin; and if he does not give up orison, he will not merely give up sin, but he will wean his heart from creatures and give it all to God. "In meditatione mea exardescet ignis." Orison inflames the heart with divine Love.

The best
place and
time for
it.

CCCI. The best place for orison is the Church, but when that is not convenient, we can make it everywhere, in our houses or in the fields, working or walking, it matters not; all we want is to raise our hearts to God. Many a simple peasant, who cannot make it otherwise makes it thus; for whoso seeks God, can find Him in every place and at all times. Morning is the best time for orison; all the actions of the day will suffer, if the day has not been begun with orison. It should also be the conclusion of our day; and if it cannot be made in the morning, it should, at least at night. P. Caraffa founder of "the pious workmen," used to say that one fervent act of love in our morning orison would suffice to keep alive a fervent spirit throughout the day. As to the length of time given to orison, each person's pastor or Confessor must decide that; but half an hour is certainly not enough for one who seeks to attain to any high degree of perfection. Nevertheless it will be enough for beginners, who

should be warned not to give up prayer, because they suffer from dryness.

CCCII. To teach orison practically. It consists How to learn it. of three parts; i. e. preparation, meditation, and conclusion. Preparation includes three acts. 1) placing oneself in God's presence; 2) humiliation; 3) asking light of the Holy Spirit. For the first say, "My God, I believe that Thou art present here, and I worship Thee from the depth of my nothingness." For the second, "Lord, I deserve to be even now in hell by reason of my sins; I repent that I have ever offended Thee; do Thou forgive me according to Thy great mercy." For the third, "Eternal Father, give me light to profit by this my meditation, for the love of Thy Son Jesus." These acts should be made attentively, but briefly, and then pass on to the meditation. It is often helpful for this, to use some book, pausing at what moves us most. S. F. de Sales says we should imitate the bee, who remains on a flower as long as it finds any honey, and then passes on to another. One who cannot read should meditate upon the Last Things, the gifts of God, and especially the Life and Passion of our Lord. This, S. F. de Sales says, should be our ordinary meditation. There is no book so precious to the devout soul, none which instructs us so deeply in the hatefulness of sin and the love of God for men. The venerable Bernard de Corlion once asked the Saviour if he should learn to read? His Crucified Lord answered, "Wherefore? am not I thy Book? let that suffice thee."

CCCIII. Remember that the fruits of orison do In what consists the fruit of orison. not lie so much in meditation itself, as in the affec-

tions, petitions, resolutions you draw out thence. Therefore, when you have meditated upon some saving truth, and God has made Himself heard within your heart, let your heart in its turn speak to God, making acts of faith, of gratitude, adoration, praise, humility, and above all, of love and of contrition, for contrition is an act of love. Love is the golden chain which binds the soul to God. "Charitas est vinculum perfectionis." Each act of love makes us partakers of God's friendship. "Infinitus enim est thesaurus quo qui usi sunt, participes facti sunt amicitiae Dei. Ego diligentes me diligo. Qui diligit me diligitur a Patre Meo. Charitas operit multitudinem peccatorum." Sister Mary of the Crucifix once saw a great fire which instantly consumed some sheaves of straw which were cast therein, and she was taught that even thus one act of love burnt out all the sins of the soul. S. Thomas teaches that each act of love wins us a fresh degree of eternal glory: "Quilibet actus charitatis meretur vitam æternam." Such acts are briefly made. "My God, I love Thee above all things; I love Thee with my whole heart; I would that all men might love Thee. Lord, teach me what Thou wouldest have done; behold, I am ready. Here am I, do with me whatsoever Thou wilt." Such an offering of self is a most acceptable act of love, and S. Theresa was wont to make it fifty times a day. If the soul feels itself united to God in supernatural recollection, as we have said before (No 273), it is better not to seek to make any other acts, than those to which it is led gently by God. In such case it is better to wait and see what He

will do, for fear of hindering the Divine workings. S. F. de Sales says, that if the Holy Spirit moves us to any good affections before we have made our meditation, it must give way to such affections, which are, after all, its only end. So that if we have obtained the end, we need not scruple to leave the means alone.

CCCIV. It is very useful in meditation to extend our prayers, asking humbly and confidently for God's enlightening grace, for pardon, perseverance, a happy death, Paradise, but above all for the gift of His Divine Love; which, as S. F. de Sales was wont to say, in itself contains all else. If the soul be afflicted with spiritual desolation, it is enough to say with David, "Deus, in adiutorium meum intende." "I know by experience," says the venerable P. Seigneri, "that nothing is more useful in meditation than to pray and pray on, through the Name or the Merits of Jesus Christ, Who has promised that whatsoever we ask the Father in His Name, shall be given unto us. During our orison, or at the end, we should make some resolutions; not merely general, such as to avoid any deliberate fault, however trifling; to give ourselves wholly to God; &c. but also special, as to take more pains to avoid such and such a fault which often besets us; or to practise better some particular virtue which one has frequent occasion to practise; as for instance, bearing the ill temper of some one; obeying a superior more exactly, keeping a rule more watchfully, mortifying ourselves in some particular thing &c. Never leave off your prayer without having made some special resolution.

CCCV. The conclusion contains three acts: 1) Thanking God for the light He has vouchsafed during the meditation; 2) Promising to keep faithfully the resolutions just made; 3) Asking God, by the intercession of Jesus, for grace to be steadfast in them. Intercessory prayer for the departed, the Church, all sinners, our relations, friends, and benefactors should come next; nor should we forget when our orison is ended, to gather what S. F. de Sales calls a bouquet of flowers, the sweetness of which may last us through the day; i. e. we should keep before us some one or two points, in which our soul has found most solace, wherewith to maintain a devout and recollected spirit through the day. It is also important not to neglect to put our resolutions into immediate practice, so soon as the occasion may arise; as for instance to soothe some one who is angry, by our gentleness; to restrain our eyes, ears, or tongue; and specially we should try to preserve the affections we have just experienced, by means of silence. If we yield to immediate distractions or useless conversations, all the fervour of devotion recently gained, will melt away. Above all, urge upon your penitents never to give up meditation, or to curtail it because of dryness; and never to be made uneasy, however great or long their desolation of spirit may be. How many courtiers go perpetually to the King's presence, says S. F. de Sales, and are satisfied merely to be seen there. We go to our orison to give honour to God and to please Him; if He vouchsafe to speak to us, and bestow His consolations upon us, let us thank Him for His

great grace; but if not, let us be content to remain calmly in His Blessed Presence, worshipping Him, and telling Him all our needs. If He does not speak to us, He will assuredly accept our patience and faith, and through quietness and confidence we shall obtain all we ask.

CCCVI°. Inasmuch as it is in meditation especially, that God acts upon souls, you should continually ask of Him light to know the true workings of His Holy Spirit. If you have any persons under your direction, who are favoured with the extraordinary gifts of which I have already spoken, watch carefully, 1) whether they follow the less ordinary sense of Holy Scripture, which is not so safe as the more usual interpretation; Holy Scripture being the rule whereby God leads souls. 2) It is a work of His Spirit to fill those whom He loves with great fear as well as great confidence; the one proceeds from a knowledge of our own weakness, the other from a holy love; the devil, on the contrary, leads men to exalted notions of virtue and a good life, tempting them to trust in themselves and their own works. 3) But the true touchstone whereby we may know the good Spirit from the bad, and distinguish a beginner from one who has made some way in the spiritual life, is readiness to endure; since the bad spirit becomes worse in affliction, and murmurs against God's Providence. The beginner is put out by having to bear somewhat and then he repents having given way to impatience; he who has made some progress will sometimes drag his

Means of discerning the work of God in the soul.

° S. F. de Sales, t. II. p. 628.

Cross heavily, but looking up to his Master and Saviour bearing his Cross to Calvary, new strength comes, he takes it up again, and patiently resigns himself, giving God thanks. A perfect man, who is as rare as the Arabian phoenix, is not content to endure injury, calumny and persecution, but rather goes to seek them as welcome friends, as tokens and badges of God's true servants.

CCCVII. 4) Another sign of a man's being favoured by the Spirit of God is, when he is very gentle and merciful to his neighbour, even when suffering at his hands; on the contrary, that false zeal which judges all and would punish all, is a sign of Satan's influence at work. 5) Another good sign is not being driven from the practice of virtue by the difficulties which must be encountered. God has not placed the flaming sword before the gates of Paradise to keep out any who seek Him Alone; and although He permits His elect to be tried with sufferings, hardness and crosses, yet He fills them so abundantly with graces, strength and sweetness, that they count it all joy and gain to suffer for His love. But Satan, on the contrary, would make them believe that God is fearful in vengeance for every trifling fault, that He is all anger and severity; He Who never hears the faintest cry from the weakest of His servants without coming to his aid, and Who is moved by the first tear shed by one who is truly of a contrite heart! But beware of the devil's wiles; before a man has sinned, Satan sets God before him as powerless and unheeding; directly he has been overthrown, the devil represents God as sur-

rounded with lightnings and flames, ready to annihilate the sinner.

CCCVIII. 6) You must examine whether those, to whom any supernatural gifts are granted, are filled with self-esteem; thinking much of their own gifts and graces, and despising or suspecting such as God bestows upon other men; inasmuch as the surest mark of holiness is, when it is founded upon true and deep humility, and ardent charity. "Supernatural works may be carried on in hypocrites as well as in Saints," says S. Bernard; but their truth and substance may be tested by the humility which accompanies them. As to the persons who are deceived, they often shelter themselves under the authority of God Himself, but you should take heed to their way of speaking of such things. For instance when they say confidently, that they know what God would have them do; that He warns others through them of what is necessary to be done; that you should trust to them, and they will answer to God; with similar words implying a very intimate conversation with Heaven; do you watch whether their actions are in conformity with such high pretensions. See whether such persons are most moved with indignation and horror or with compassion and pity by the infirmities of their brethren, inasmuch as that zeal is false which declaims against our neighbours' sins, and takes pleasure in needlessly exposing them. Again, examine whether, in speaking of God, these people wander off in affected language, seeking to shew forth their own light, for the praise of men.

CCCIX. Again, when you want to judge if

such persons are really moved by God, and truly receive His Grace, examine whether they are very much attached to their own will and judgment, or whether they are mistrustful of self and shrink back from self-assertion, until they have been tried and confirmed by their directors or other experienced persons. The Holy Spirit specially loves humble and obedient souls; and He Who is Himself the Prince of Peace, delights in submissive peace-loving followers. The proud spirit of evil, on the contrary, makes those whom He seeks to deceive, bold, selfwilled and obstinate, leading them to take such delight in their own failings, that they fear above all things to be cured, and believe those who seek to do them good to be actuated by envy rather than charity. Finally, examine whether these people are simple and true in their words and actions; whether they seek to shew forth their gifts needlessly, and desire to shine forth before men. The Father of Lights guides the souls He loves by inward affections, which flow gently and unseen upon them, like soft rain which waters the earth in silence and stillness. S. Chrysostome says that God did indeed give His Commandments to the Jews with thunder and fearful signs, but it was necessary that they should be taught by fear; whereas our Lord came gently to His Apostles, who were lowly and meek, and more easily taught.

ARTICLE V.

Treatment of various needy souls.

CCCX^p. You will require all your qualifications as father, physician &c., not only on behalf of holy and privileged souls, but also with sinners, each of whom requires a special treatment according to his disease. You will have to deal with persons who have serious difficulties to cope with; bad habits to correct; occasions of sin to remove, enemies to forgive, restoration of the property or fame of others to make; and a negligent confessor runs the risk of leaving such people to grope for years in their sin, or the neglect of their duties; while an over-severe confessor, or one who is not sufficiently versed in the study of asceticism, may easily discourage such penitents and throw them back, by exacting too much, or by failing to give them all the help they require in fulfilling their duties. As to bad habits and relapses, spiritual maladies, so serious and so common require to be separately considered; at present I would speak of the treatment of immediate occasions of sin, which it is your special duty to remove, when they are such as S. Charles calls "in esse," as e. g., when a man retains in his home a person who is the

Of those
under oc-
casion of
sin.

^p Prêtre sanctifié, n. 80-83.

cause of sin to him. I have already shown how you can decide whether the occasion is proximate or not: if it be so, indulgence is cruelty; and the severity with which you insist upon its removal, is true charity. Thus, notwithstanding any promises which your penitent may make, you should not trust him, but require him to remove the occasion of sin before you give him absolution. In fact, in the case here supposed there is an exciting cause of sin present with him, moving him continually not only to the sin of omission in not dismissing it, but also to sins of commission by formal interior, or even perhaps exterior, acts. If in certain cases there should be any moral or physical impossibility of removing the occasion of sin, such as infamy, scandal &c., before giving absolution, take such means as are possible to remove the occasion as far as is possible, and require some convincing proofs of amendment. If there are reasons, why you cannot well delay absolution, and the penitent be humble and willing to accept such necessary remedies as you may enjoin, such as not being alone with the person in question, performing certain penances, and chiefly having recourse to frequent prayer and confession; then you can absolve him on the strength of his promise.

Of the removal of occasions of sin.

CCCXI. In the case of removing ordinary occasions of sin, it is well to insist on their removal before giving absolution; but according to S. Charles, a confessor may give it once or twice upon the strength of a sincere promise; but if the penitent were to fail repeatedly in keeping such promises, you could not risk absolving him without a better

guarantee than his word. Such penitents could for the most part fulfil their obligations by a single act; restitution, restoring, forgiveness &c., so that if they fail in its performance, you have no proof of their real and effectual sincerity; consequently you cannot prudently absolve them, while their broken promises contradict all their protestations of repentance. But while, as judge, you are constrained to defer a favourable sentence, your charity and skill should be especially exercised on behalf of such persons; stimulating them by fresh motives, urging them to do what is required and then return to you to be comforted. Appoint a time for them, to seek you again under any circumstances, whether they have fulfilled their obligation or no, to take breath as it were, and tell you the difficulties they have met with, so that you may assist them more effectually, or even give them some dispensation, should there be sufficient cause.

CCCXII. To this end, you must ascertain why they have failed hitherto. And here you should observe the difference between the duties of restitution and of removing an occasion of sin; in the latter case, it is a question of continual, active danger, of formal, not material sin, whereby God is offended and two souls lost. Therefore you must beware of the slightest indulgence, except where physical or moral impossibility exists. But it is otherwise with respect to restitution. If you find sufficient difficulty here to justify delay, although not to dispense with restitution altogether, you need not refuse absolution, as without forwarding the advantage of the creditor, you might

Difference between the obligation of restitution and removal of the proximate occasion.

hinder the debtor's spiritual progress. It would be better to give absolution, at the same time fixing a period when restitution shall be made and desiring your penitent to pray daily or frequently, that he may have power and courage to acquit himself of his debt. You should require him to come again to confession at a fixed time, so as to keep him up to his resolutions, and you must also be prepared to advise him respecting the difficulties he may meet with in the fulfilment of his duty. Supposing for instance, that the case is one of reconciliation with an enemy, from whom he fears an unkind reception, you must not dispense with the external act of charity, but you can assist in paving the way through some common friend, or take other measures for bringing the two together under soothing circumstances. Or if the penitent has told true, but hidden, ill of another; he may repair his want of charity with less shame to himself and more benefit to his neighbour, by asking those to whom he spoke, not to repeat what he said, as he finds he was mistaken. This is true, as he was guilty of error, as regards charity at least, and it is better that he should not enter into further explanations. If it be a case of sending a person away who is the occasion of sin to your penitent, and that suspicions may be aroused or confirmed in so doing, it should be arranged that the person in question goes of her own accord.

Discretion
under
certain
critical
circum-
stances.

CCCXIII. In the matter of obligations, it will from time to time occur, that you will have to deal with persons, who may have much that is good in

them, but who will rebel against certain things which you require to be done. Now if you persist, and hold them unworthy of absolution because they will not give way, while gaining one point, you will lose far more; indeed you may possibly lose everything, for you may drive such persons altogether away; they may refuse to go to confession at all, and their souls may be exposed to the greatest dangers in consequence. In such a case, well-meaning persons, falling back, are liable to get altogether wrong. Beware therefore of an indiscreet zeal under such circumstances; consider carefully whether the duty you wish to exact is not to be imposed "*sub veniali*," rather than "*sub gravi*," and if it be possible, yield the point. The penitent may be worthy of absolution, if he repents truly, and is ready to fulfil his other obligations. By yielding, you may lead him to a more earnest fulfilment of his duties, and perhaps you may induce him to do some extra good work in order to obtain fresh grace. If on the other hand, the obligation is certain and serious; and the penitent, while acknowledging this, refuses to fulfil it, he is undoubtedly not fit to receive absolution. Teach him to pray for the courage necessary to fulfil his duty; do everything in your power to move and strengthen him, and use any lawful means in your reach to facilitate its accomplishment. But if, though the obligation be certain and serious, the penitent is unconscious of it, and you have good reason to believe that, if made aware of its existence, he would not be induced to fulfil it, because of the exceeding difficulty, then prudence

demands the greatest caution. You must ascertain whether the penitent's ignorance is vincible or invincible. If the former, if he has doubts, still more, if he questions you, you are bound to enlighten him, and to tell him the truth, but not to go beyond his doubts or questions. If his ignorance be invincible, and the matter in question is not important to his own salvation, or prejudicial to others, it is sometimes allowable to hold your peace, in order to avoid a greater evil.

Different
kinds of
occasion.

CCCXIV. One of the most important points in direction is with respect to occasions of sin. Doubtless if men were careful to avoid the occasions of sin, the greater part of those sins which are committed would be avoided. The devil would have much less chance, but for such occasions; but when men voluntarily place themselves in immediate occasion of sin, the devil almost always gains the victory. Occasion is as a net drawing men into sin, and blinding them to it, especially in sensual pleasures; so that they do evil almost without realising it. Occasions are divided into voluntary, and necessary. Voluntary occasions are those which can easily be avoided: necessary occasions such as cannot be avoided without scandal or serious difficulty. They are divided into proximate and remote. The remote occasion is, where a fall is rare, or such as occurs every where; the proximate occasion, "*per se*," is that in which men "*communitur ut plurimum deficiunt*." The relative proximate occasion "*per accidens*," is that which, while it is not proximate to others, because it does not ordinarily lead them to sin, is

yet immediate to the particular individual, either because he has already often sinned thus, or because a consciousness of his own frailty gives him good reason to fear that he will fall through it. Some theologians hold that any occasion in which a man always or usually sins, is to be esteemed proximate occasion. But the most common and correct opinion is that proximate occasion lies wherever a man has frequently sinned. Two things however must be remarked here: 1) The occasion which is proximate to most people, may be quite remote to a very prudent and pious person. 2) Certain occasions, which "per se" are remote to most people, may be proximate to one who has become very weak and prone to fall, through a succession of falls, or a strong inclination to vice, especially in shameful vices. Such a man is therefore bound not merely to shun proximate occasions of sin, but also such remote occasions as become proximate in his special case.

CCCXV. He is obviously in proximate occasion of sin who keeps any woman who has been the cause of sin to him in his house: he who in gambling, often has been led into fraud, or blasphemy: he who by frequenting some particular house or place, has been accustomed to get drunk, to quarrel, or to give way to obscene thoughts, words or deeds. Such persons cannot receive absolution until they have removed the occasion of sin, or at all events till they have promised to do so. Supposing a man to know that, in going to a certain house, he has always been guilty of sin, though it were but once a year, it is proximate

The notes
of proximate
occasions.

occasion to him, and absolution must be refused. Those again who, without actually being guilty of sin upon the occasion, are the cause of scandal to others, cannot be absolved. Some theologians say that absolution should be refused to a man who refuses to give up an outward occasion which involves some vicious habit, some great temptation, or some violent passion, although he may not hitherto have fallen into it; inasmuch as he may easily fall at anytime if he does not avoid the occasion. Thus a maid-servant who has been tempted by her master, and who feels that she might be easily led into sin, ought to leave the house, if she can do so; otherwise it is self-confidence on her part to trust herself.

Practical
conduct.

CCCXVI. It is well to observe, generally, that, where there is a question of danger of formal sin, and above all of shameful sins, the more severity the confessor exercises towards the penitent, the more useful it will be to his soul. On the contrary, it is most cruel to a penitent, to be easy in allowing him to put himself in an occasion of sin. S. Thomas de Villeneuve calls confessors who are yielding on this point *impie pios*. Such charity is contrary to charity. In such a case, penitents are accustomed to represent to the confessor that removing the occasion will make a great scandal. Be firm, and take no account of such scandals. It will in all cases be a greater scandal to see that the penitent does not remove the occasion, even after he has confessed. Either people are ignorant of his sin, and then they will not entertain any suspicion of evil, or they know it; in

this case the penitent will regain his reputation rather than lose it, by removing the occasion.

CCCXVII. Many theologians say that a penitent ^{An important distinction.} may be once or twice absolved who has not yet removed a voluntary proximate occasion, provided he has a firm intention of removing it directly. But here a distinction must be made, according to S. C. Borromeo, between occasions "in esse," as where a man keeps a mistress in his house &c., and those which are not "in esse;" as where a man blasphemes in playing; or quarrels and drinks in taverns; or is guilty of impure thoughts or words in conversation &c. S. Charles says that in these occasions, which are not "in esse," if the penitent sincerely promises amendment, he may be absolved two, or even three times; but if, after that, he still does not amend, absolution must be withheld until he has actually removed the occasion. S. Charles says that with respect to those cases "in esse," the penitent may not be absolved until he has actually put away the occasion; his word will not suffice. Such a man does not deserve absolution, because he exposes himself to the temptation of postponing the fulfilment of his promise, and of remaining as he is. He who voluntarily remains in proximate occasion of mortal sin, without seeking to put it away, is certainly guilty of mortal sin. Putting away the occasion is very difficult, and requires a great effort, which effort the penitent will scarcely make when he has obtained absolution; after which he may flatter himself that he will be able to resist the temptation; so he will continue in the proximate occasion, and fall anew. Such is

the daily experience of many unhappy persons, who, being absolved by imprudent confessors, do not remove the occasion of sin, and consequently fall lower than before. Therefore, because of the danger of breaking his resolution, that penitent who receives absolution before removing the occasion of sin, is guilty in so receiving it; and still more guilty is the confessor who absolves him.

CCCXVIII. This may be generally affirmed; but theologians make an exception of the case in which a penitent gives extraordinary signs of contrition, so that it may be safely believed that there is no fear of his failing in his resolution to remove the proximate occasion. Such signs do indeed prove that he has received a grace so abundant, that it may fairly be hoped that he will be faithful to his resolution. Nevertheless, even in such a case, I should, if possible, defer absolution until the resolution is actually carried out, unless the penitent could not return at all, or not for a long time; in which case he might be absolved, if he was prepared immediately to remove the occasion. We should consider the danger of breaking his resolution as a distant danger, because of the great penalty, "*magni oneris*," which he would incur by going away unabsolved. He would be obliged either to repeat his confession to another priest, or to remain for long unabsolved. Being therefore under a moral necessity of being absolved, the occasion may be considered necessary.

Necessary
occasions.

CCCXIX. If the occasion be either *physically* necessary; that is, supposing a man to be in prison, or at the point of death, and so having neither power

nor time to send away his mistress; or *morally* necessary; that is, if the occasion cannot be removed without scandal, or serious injury either to life, reputation, or property; theologians have generally decided that the penitent may be absolved without putting away the occasion. In fact he is not bound to put it away, provided he promises to use fit means to prevent it from being proximate. These means are, avoiding familiarity, especially in the case of sensual vices; frequenting the Sacraments, commending oneself often to God, and daily renewing, before a crucifix, the resolution to abstain from sin, and from its occasion as far as possible. Occasion of sin is not in itself sin, and does not involve a necessity of sin; consequently the occasion is not incompatible with a true repentance, and a hearty intention not to fall into it again. No doubt every man is bound to quit an immediate danger of sin, but he must have power to do so. If then the occasion be a moral necessity, danger is averted by the use of suitable means, and God will not fail to assist those who heartily desire not to offend Him. It is not written, "He that is in danger shall perish therein," but, "he who loves danger;" and one who is in it, in spite of himself, cannot be said to love danger. Thus S. Basil says: "*Qui urgenti aliqua causa et necessitate se periculo objicit, vel permittit se esse in illo, cum tamen alias nollet, non tam dicitur amare periculum, quam invitus subire; et ideo magis providebit Deus ne in illo pereat.*"

CCCXX. Consequently theologians hold, that if a man will not give up an occupation or a house in

which he is wont to sin, because he cannot do so without serious difficulty, he may still be absolved, if he be sincerely resolved to amend, and to take every means for so doing; e. g., surgeons who have fallen into sin when attending women, or priests in hearing confessions; who would have no means of livelihood if they gave up their profession. But all theologians agree that in such cases it is wise to defer absolution, even if it be only to move the penitent to greater care in fulfilling the prescribed means; and indeed the confessor is bound to do so, it seems to me, specially where it is a question of sensual vice. As the physician of souls, he is bound to administer the most healing remedies. And I hold the best remedies in proximate occasions to be the delay of absolution, as is proved by one's experience of many unfortunate people who having obtained absolution, neglect the means enjoined, and speedily fall again; but while under delay, the penitent will be more careful to take the precautions which are due, and to resist temptation, lest he should again be dismissed without absolution. I may be considered severe, but I have always held this line with those who are in proximate occasion of sin even when it is inevitable, and when they give very positive signs of contrition, unless there is any absolute necessity for absolving them; and I believe this course to be for the penitent's salvation, and that, if confessors generally would do the like, there would be less sin on earth, and more souls in Heaven. When it is a question of taking a man from formal sin, the confessor ought to follow the most indulgent line

which Christian prudence will permit; but if indulgence bring the danger of formal sin nearer, I maintain that it is useful and necessary for the confessor to take a severe line for the soul's sake. And if the penitent, who is in a necessary occasion, always falls in the same way, in spite of all precautions, and with small prospect of amendment, I should positively refuse to absolve him, until he had removed the occasion. The Gospel precept, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out," must be obeyed in such a case; unless indeed the penitent gives such extra proofs of contrition, as to justify a real hope of his amendment.

CCCXXI^a. A confessor needs the greatest prudence in avoiding the opposite dangers of excessive indulgence, or over-severity in directing those unhappy men, who, laden with bad habits, fall on every side. He requires no small measure of holiness and firmness, in order to break the chains which have bound such an one through long years of sin; and nothing but a holy severity, and a fixed resolution to conquer, will avail. Our Saviour's own words teach us the rigour with which such desperate cases must be treated. The remedies are these; Flight, the knife, and the fire (Fuite, fer et feu). "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee;" if the occasion be as dear to your penitent as the apple of his eye, he must nevertheless quit it. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee;" if your penitent soils his hand continually in games, festivities and debauchery, he must cut

Firmness
essential.

^a B. Leonard, No. 16-24.

it off without pity. "If thy foot offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee;" if he frequents any house or society where he falls daily, he must avoid it at all costs. "Cast it from thee." These words are so clear and so imperative, they should move us to form a holy league, and agree never to absolve any one who, being in the proximate occasion of sin, can avoid it, and yet will not do so. Remember the condemned proposition; "Potest aliquando absolvi, qui in proxima occasione peccandi versatur, quam potest et non vult omittere, quinimo directe, et ex proposito, quærit aut ei se ingerit." What is the true proposition? "Nunquam potest absolvi qui in proxima occasione peccandi versatur." No, no, never ought one to absolve one who wills to abide in a proximate occasion of sin.

Signs exterior and interior of proximate occasion.

CCCXXII. But in order to act with prudence, it is necessary to understand clearly what the proximate occasion really is; for this is a very nice point, and one concerning which theologians are not agreed. The most generally received opinion is that which I would now advance. I start with presuming that every one knows that a danger of sin and a proximate occasion are not identical, nor even proximate danger and proximate occasion. The latter always and necessarily depends upon some external circumstance which does not necessarily involve danger, though that may be at hand. For instance: David beheld Bathsheba washing herself; the eye betrays the heart; and though to that moment there had been no danger, he was soon moved to act; and "he sent to take her." Here we see the proximate occasion caused by the

circumstance of place and the presence of the object, with the frequency of falls granted, without which there would not be any proximate occasion. There are two things which make the proximate occasion: 1) an interior propensity to sin, whence the peril springs; 2) an external circumstance which gives the impulse, and affords the opportunity for sin. In spite of all his interior propensity to sin, David would not have committed adultery but for the exterior circumstances of the place, and the visible object: just as, given those same exterior circumstances, he would not have sinned without the evil interior disposition. Moreover his fall could not be called a proximate occasion, if it had not been frequently repeated; for he lived with Bathsheba during a year to the scandal of his people. Such are the principles upon which the definition of the proximate occasion is given. The name is usually given to *that occasion, on which, duly considering the circumstances of a man, the place, and past experience, he sins always, or for the most part, or at all events frequently.* It is thus distinguished from remote occasion—in which, given the same circumstances, he sins but rarely; so that proximate occasion never becomes such, except when either absolutely or relatively it is frequently united to sin. This is the characteristic by which theologians distinguish it from remote occasion. Other definitions all amount to the same thing, although they may be couched in different terms; for all doctors consider frequency of falling to be part of the thing; that is, relatively; i. e., that the man falls generally when

he is exposed to the temptation. The number of falls cannot be mathematically laid down; but must be left to the confessor's judgement. He will bear in mind that certain occasions are absolutely proximate to every one, and others relatively, only. That will be a proximate occasion to a young man, which is not to an old one; inasmuch as to the latter the first condition is wanting, i. e., propensity to the sin. In order to make this subject clear, we must carefully explain the two constituent principles of proximate occasion.

CCCXXIII. First with respect to that interior propensity which involves proximate danger of sin, each man may know this himself; it is the result of that leaven of sin which we inherit from Adam. It is more or less strong in different people, according to the nature of the bad habits they have acquired; and sometimes it is necessary to attack it through acts of the opposite tendency (as will be seen when we come to speak of necessary or involuntary proximate occasion); since, where the exterior circumstances cannot be altered, we must strive to weaken the interior disposition, so that occasion which is already necessary may not become voluntary. As to circumstance, which is the second condition of proximate occasion, it does not follow that it must always be bad or very bad; in its nature, as theologians say, it may be sometimes good, and even holy. For instance, let us suppose a weak confessor; he hears confessions; an external circumstance, which in itself is good. But he is in proximate occasion of sin if he is overcome by some bad habit, and often consents

to evil thoughts: even in hearing confessions he is in proximate occasion of sin; and there can be no doubt that he is bound either to give up his function or to take the most effectual means of correcting himself. One cannot specify all these external circumstances; every thing in the world may become such: one man finds proximate occasion in the circumstance of place; another of person; another in conversation, play, commerce, love, &c. There is not one single good or indifferent thing in the world which cannot be abused by man's wickedness; and thus, whenever a sinner encounters such circumstances, as cause him frequently to fall, let them be what they may, they are proximate occasion to him; and he is unworthy of absolution unless he avoids them effectually.

CCCXXIV. Next as to the frequency of fall, without which we do not find proximate occasion, according to the definition above. We have said that that occasion is proximate, when a man falls always, almost always, or at least frequently: and therefore we must define what is meant by *frequently*. It is a mistake to suppose that the proximate occasion only exists when gross acts of sin are committed; words and looks are the same. Again a priest, who ought to give himself to teaching and visiting his people, gives himself up to a quiet kind of sporting, and respectable society: there is no manner of evil; but by going out hunting, shooting, play, or into society, he neglects his people: who can doubt that this is a proximate occasion of sin to him, since omitting to teach his people or administer the Sacraments

to them, is a sin of omission? There is no absolute measure of the frequency which constitutes proximate occasion; it must be relative; that is, in proportion to the number of times in which a man is exposed to the occasion. Sometimes we must not so much regard the number of material falls, as the influence of the occasion upon the sin, and the way in which the sin is consequent upon the occasion.

CCCXXV. Here consider the condemned proposition: "Potest aliquando absolvi, qui in proxima occasione peccandi versatur quam potest, et non vult omittere, quinimo directe, et ex proposito quærit aut ei se ingerit." We shall find sundry difficulties in the application of this principle to individual cases, but all will be removed by the help of the following principle; "There is no reason sufficient to exempt a sinner from the obligation of avoiding a proximate occasion of mortal sin, save physical or moral impossibility." Where it is impossible entirely to avoid the occasion, the confessor should suggest four useful precautions; 1) to avoid being with the person through whom it arises. 2) Having constant recourse to God, by means of ejaculatory prayer, such as "Mercy, Jesu;" and frequent and firm resolutions, made with sincere sorrow for having displeased God, and hearty intention of amendment of life. 3) Frequent reception of the Sacraments from the same confessor, readily using such remedies as he suggests. 4) Some slight penance which the Spiritual Father may consider desirable. These means will not all be tried at once, but in succession, until by God's

grace the desired result is obtained. If, with the help of such means, a man corrects himself, he becomes fit for absolution; but if in spite of them we can find no sign of amendment, we must pronounce him unfit for it and openly say, "*Perditio tua ex te.*" In such a case the necessary occasion becomes voluntary. Of course there is a great difficulty in distinguishing when the moral impossibility is real and when it is false.—When you are in doubt, turn to God, and ask Him to give you wisdom not to err, and He will not fail you. It is best to take the surest line, where you are doubtful, and if possible to cut short the sin at its fountain head.

CCCXXVI. Next, as to the voluntary proximate occasion, by which I mean such as a man may, but will not forsake; this is the most difficult case that a confessor can have to deal with. Here the only course is resolutely to cut the knot, which causes so much sin; and it is marvellous to see how many excuses and subterfuges men will invent in order to avoid a final separation from the occasion of their sin. The confessor must be on his guard, and not believe all that is told him too easily; he must be ready to refute and set aside objections, as well as to suggest expedients, so that the penitent may have no excuse left, save his own deficient will; and if his will be not sincere, he ought not to receive absolution.

CCCXXIX.* Here I would remark that many confessors, who are zealous in obliging their peni-

* cccxxvii. cccxxviii, omitted as being a repetition of what is "in esse," what not "in esse."

tents to forsake all occasions of sin against chastity, are careless with respect to the numerous occasions of sinning against the other commandments of God. S. Charles especially dwells on this, numbering among occasions which are not "in esse," those which many people encounter in their respective professions, and through which they fall into serious sins; blasphemy, theft, injustice, calumny, hatred, fraud, perjury, &c. S. Charles says that absolution must be withheld from all such, if after two or three warnings they give no signs of repentance; and if, after reiterated warnings, they do not amend, they ought to be obliged to leave the active cause of such grievous sin. But you must use every effort and the utmost prudence, before coming to such an extremity. Where you find it a moral impossibility that a professional man, doctor, surgeon, innkeeper, shopkeeper, lawyer, &c., should give up his profession, inasmuch as it is his livelihood, you must try all means to reclaim him; but if at last you can find no signs of amendment, you must urge his quitting a profession which clearly will at last involve his perdition.

Remedies
for occa-
sions.

CCCCXX. * Absolution should be delayed until we see *some sort of amendment* in those of whom a confessor can foresee that although they promise to forsake their sins, they will not really do so; among which persons I include idle young men who spend most of their time in mere amusement and are often entangled in bad and impure society, whereby they fall into sins of blasphemy, indecent words, hatred, slander, &c: as also such

* S. Charles, p. 43-54.

persons as have gone on for several years in the same sins, without taking any real pains to correct themselves. No one ought to receive absolution who has not a firm resolution to forsake all mortal sin, as well as all occasion of committing it; and as it is most important for confessors thoroughly to understand this, we will go somewhat more closely into it.

We call "occasion of mortal sin" whatever circumstances can cause it, either because they lead directly to sin, or because the penitent is so accustomed to sin when he finds himself so circumstanced, that his confessor is justified in believing that this bad habit will always prevail when similar occasions arise. Among the first, i. e., such occasions as lead directly to sin, we should class gambling or leading others to gamble; having a person in the house with whom a man offends God, and habitually frequenting her society; absolution should not be given unless a man both promises and shews some sign of amendment in putting away such occasions of sin^t.

CCCXXXII. This requires all the more care, from the fact that there are occasions of sin in almost every profession and line of life; which hinder what is in itself right and good; e. g., magistrates and officials swear to observe many things which they neglect: lawyers and counsel foster other men's ill feelings, and forward what they know all the time to be injustice: soldiers encourage duels, hatred, quarrels, gambling, debau-

* cccxxxi. (Repetition of the remedies for "occasions."—omitted.)

cheries, &c. In commerce, usury and fraud are practised, things are adulterated, and what is bad is given out as good, things are sold at more than their worth, dues are evaded, &c. Artisans work on holy days, neglecting God's service, mostly not hearing His word, bringing up their children to the same. Now such people are living on in mortal sin, and are consequently incapable of absolution, until they either forsake the occasions of sin, or take measures to resist them. Very likely the confessor will find that some of these people have never made a good confession, and then it is desirable to teach them how to make a general confession, as well as to use strong remedies to conquer the sin which misleads them.

CCCXXXIII. The confessor should be specially particular with regard to all such practices and actions as are neither useful or necessary, and which, although not in themselves occasions of mortal sin, yet have a tendency to evil, and easily lead people on into it: such as frequenting balls, taverns, or bad company of any sort; idleness, and similar things which induce sin; refusing absolution to those who will not abstain from them. If the confessor thinks he can trust his penitent's promise, he may give absolution once or twice upon the strength of it, but not more, and after that it must be withheld until the penitent has actually given up the occasion of sin. Nor ought absolution to be given, before restitution or amends have been made by such as are under obligation to make it, if they can, except the sick, who are in danger: and these too must be told to make it as soon as they can.

ARTICLE VI.

Treatment of bad habits and relapses.

CCCXXXIV^a. One of your hardest and most important duties is the dealing with habitual and relapsing sinners; nor can their faults, constantly recurring and unexpected as they are, be dealt with summarily on one system, but by a prolonged and arduous course of treatment: for the passions, which seemed to be conquered to-day, spring forth afresh to-morrow, and when defeated on one side, take us by surprise on the other. It is in dealing with such sick souls as these above all others, that you require the balm composed of the oil of compassion and encouragement, so that they may not despair, and of the wine of paternal authority, so that they may not be careless and flag in their earnest efforts to amend. They are exposed to two opposite and yet simultaneous perils; despair, because of the difficulty of their position; and presumption, which urges them to regard their want of purpose and perseverance as a real impossibility.

With regard to habitual and relapsing sinners.

CCCXXXV. Such persons should not be absolved unless you can satisfy yourself as to the fitness of their disposition; and the proofs that this

When absolution should be delayed.

^a Prêtre sanctifié, n. 34-100.

is lacking are; 1) If the penitent has used none or few of the means prescribed for conquering his faults: 2) If his faults have not diminished: 3) If he gives no sign of more than ordinary contrition. In such case, you have no indication of any resolute and effectual intention to amend; you can but mistrust his protestations of repentance. But while you defer giving absolution, do all in your power to lead him to amendment, by suggesting the most likely inducements and means thereto; and urge him to return speedily to confession, according to the opinion expressed by Benedict XIV. in his Apostolic Bull; "Illos, quantocius, ut revertantur invitent, ut ad sacramentale forum regressi, absolutionis beneficio donentur." Remark the word "quantocius." Thus do not leave so long an interval as a week or ten days in such a case; the sick man will derive great benefit from frequent visits on the part of his physician, who can thus watch his symptoms, and apply the fittest remedies; but rare visits from the doctor will be very prejudicial to him.

Mode of
delaying
it.

CCCXXXVI. If at the end of a week your penitent comes back without having made any improvement, send him away for a shorter time. S. Bernard, when dealing with a young man who lapsed into habitual sins of impurity, bade him return after three days, during which he was to abstain from sin, in honour of the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity to whom we owe so much. The penitent returns, without having fallen. S. Bernard then intreated him to keep watch over himself for three days more, in honour of the pu-

city of the B. Virgin. Once again the young man returns without a relapse. "My son," the Saint said, "give me three days more, in honour of your guardian Angel, to whom you already owe so much, and after that I will absolve you." At the end of the triduum, the youth returned and said, "Now I promise you to abstain from this sin, not for three days but for always. I see thus it was no want of grace or power, but of real will, which has hitherto been wanting to me: to him who sincerely wills, nothing is impossible with the grace of God." Happy young man to have fallen into the hands of so experienced a father and physician, who knew how to win him by motives at once so sweet and so powerful, and who, by skilfully lessening the difficulties and duration of the trials, dividing, so to speak, the medicine into small portions, could adapt it to his want of strength and restore him to health!

CCCCXXVII. It is a great mistake to dismiss for a fortnight or a month a penitent who has failed to abstain from sin during a week; or to tell him that it is useless to come either to you or any one else, unless he corrects himself. Perhaps he would find some S. Bernard who would succeed in curing him by the very opposite treatment. Beware lest you are misled by false zeal or ignorance of the right treatment to adopt, or by your own impatience and dislike of trouble. Doubtless at times your paternal tenderness or your medical skill will be sorely tried by the negligence of some relapsers in using the appointed remedies; or even if they do use these, by

the strength of their bad habits, their weakness or perversity, you may scarcely know how to deal with them, and then you may be tempted to send them away, not only unabsolved, but with harshness; which at the moment may seem to you justifiable, or even necessary. But in order to convince yourself that this impulse is not from God, but rather impatience cloaked with a pharisaical zeal, quite unlike that of Jesus Christ, I would ask you to think about this backsliding penitent, who appears to you so unworthy of compassion. God bore with him yesterday and bears with him to-day; this very day He so surrounded and urged the sinner with His grace, as to bring him to you in spite of his own reluctance: it is God alone Whom he has offended, and yet you, against whom he has not sinned, cannot bear with him! Do you affect to know your Master's interests better than He Himself? or do you think that this zeal, so easy to yourself, so harmful to the penitent, comes from a healthier source than the very different zeal of God? Never, I intreat you, let fall any words which may lead the relapsed sinner to despair, to which he is tempted already by the difficulty of correcting himself; but rather keep God's patience and goodness towards him ever before you as your example. Maintain a firm confidence in God, that, if you persevere in your care and your remedies, the evil will be subdued and the penitent will be cured; and thus you will be able to inspire him with earnest desires to amend, and courage to persevere. Such a hope will not be in vain: experience teaches us that with, it

may be a month, or it may be a year of patience on the part of both confessor and penitent, a thorough lasting cure may be effected. Even after very serious relapses, God has granted it, when both priest and penitent have gone on praying and toiling. Urge him to come very often, that he may diminish the power of temptation, take breath and receive fresh counsel. Hear what S. Chrysostome says: "Non erubescimus, si, cum diabolus nunquam desperet nostram perniciem, sed indesinenter eam expectet, nos fratrum salutem desperaverimus? Qui nobis erit veniæ locus, si, cum tanta sit dæmonis in nostrum exitium vigilantia, nos ne tantulum quidem similis diligentia adferamus ad salutem fratrum nostrorum, præsertim cum Deum habeamus auxiliatorem?" And again he says: "Fervidissimæ cujusdam ac verissimæ charitatis argumentum præbet, qui cum nulla simili spe alitur, tamen ob vim amoris erga fratrem non desinit illius agere curam."

CCCXXXVIII. Always receive such penitents with open arms, never betraying the slightest sign of weariness or surprise at their having fallen again so soon and so grievously: if you do, it may prevent their coming back another time. Rather commend them for coming at once, and earnestly strive to find the cause of relapse; examine what precautions they have neglected, and how and when the temptation came and got the mastery over them; you may require to know these details, better to understand the cause and remedy of the evil. Ask God to teach you suitable remedies, and among others press the necessity of frequent confession.

In the Life of S. Philip Neri, by the P. Baccia, we read, "A penitent who fell almost daily into sin came to the Saint, who gave him no other penance than bidding him come to confession directly that he fell into sin, without waiting for the chance of a second fall. The penitent obeyed, and S. Philip absolved him, continuing to give the same penance. By this means he was entirely reclaimed in a few months...and in a short time led a holy life." Of course you cannot judge from this instance exactly, what should be the test of fitness for absolution; but it shows that a penitent may not be wholly devoid of such fitness, because he cannot overcome his bad habits after his first confession; his ultimate restoration will be the proof that those repeated special confessions have borne good fruit. Moreover, you must remember that it is no light penance to such a penitent to be obliged to come and make confession directly that he falls: while it is certainly a most useful penance. It is not light, because the relapsed penitent has even greater repugnance than other sinners to accuse himself of his faithlessness to his repeated promises: the difficulty and the merit of conquering this repugnance are set forth in the decree (Can. 88. dist. 5. de Pœnit.), "*Laborat mens erubescit, et quoniam verecundia magna est pœna, qui erubescit pro Christo fit dignus misericordia.*" Thus confession is not only a light penance, but is, for the relapsers, the most salutary, because of the help given by the Sacrament "*ex opere operato*," if the penitent comes worthily, even when the priest does not feel it right to give

him absolution. The humility he exercises, and the victory he wins by returning to his confessor after each fall, and the counsel which he will then receive, will be more profitable to him than fasting and other austerities. Therefore, however often he relapses, never rebuff him; and do not impose heavy penances on him, that you may the better enforce that of immediate confession, which will become both harder to him and more necessary. Think how terrible it would be, were the unhappy sinner (who perhaps is striving to resist his bad habits more than you imagine) to give in, either from his inward misery, or from the weight that you have laid upon him; and^v fall into the most common snare of first delaying, and finally forsaking confession, so that he becomes like a sick man, whose illness increases and who has no doctor, or a sheep without a shepherd, with fresh wounds from the wolf.

CCCXXXIX. As however, Confession is most profitable when the sinner is in a fit state to receive absolution, you must study when it may be safely given: always remembering that it may be granted, where there are substantial indications of a sincere and effectual will, even if it be not *very* effectual; a sufficient and ordinary will, though it be not *extra*-ordinary. If then the relapsed sinner has used all or most of the prescribed means, and if he has notably lessened the number of his faults, you have the clear distinct signs which are required; and the will which has produced such a result, in spite of bad habits, is an effectual will.

When relapsers may be absolved.

^v Liv. 2. c. 6. n. 2.

Great authorities, and even S. Charles[▼] who is so prudent and so far removed from this kind of laxity, do not require so much. Speaking of those who have persevered for several years, and have fallen back into the same sins, and have made no efforts to amend, he prescribes the deferring of the absolution, till *some* amendment is visible. The learned author of the Instruction for new confessors cited by S. Liguori explains this moderation of the saint. Having said that the penitent may be absolved who again falls by a bad habit, so often as he shows a hearty intention to amend, he adds: "I consider it over-severe to do otherwise, and a departure from the spirit of the Church and of Christ, as well as from the nature of the Sacrament, which is not only a judgement, but a salutary remedy."

In other words, bear in mind that the Sacrament of penance has two principal results: sanctifying grace which effaces past sin and justifies the sinner; and Sacramental grace which acts as a preservative for the future, giving powerful helps against further falls. The confessor should keep this double result in view, in order to carry out his Lord's loving will. And therefore he should carefully investigate the actual disposition of the penitent; whether he heartily detests his past sins, and is resolved to avoid them at all costs, and to make use of the means requisite to that end. Such is the fundamental disposition which must precede the Sacrament; and such he exacts in his capacity of judge; if it is wholly wanting, he will

▼ P. I. c. 9. n. 213.

not remit the sins. On the other hand an entire victory over the bad habits is rather the fruit of the Sacrament, than its preliminary condition. The penitent should aim at and hope for such perseverance and constancy by God's grace and help, specially given to him in this Sacrament, which is actually his spiritual remedy. But I repeat, such perseverance is the result, not the condition of the Sacrament. As a question of *judgement*, do not absolve one who makes no amendment; but, looking on the Sacrament as a *remedy* for the future, do not exact an immediately perfect victory over bad habits, or entire perseverance: rather give that absolution which is to produce this result, and it will follow. Otherwise you will be like a physician who should seek to cure his patient solely by the use of purgatives, without sustaining his strength; so that at last the patient dies, not of his disease, but of want of nourishment. Purge your moral patient until you perceive a tendency to amendment, the proof of a sincere will; but when once that is forthcoming, nourish him with absolution, and, if it seems expedient, with Communion, and exhort him to the frequent use of these Sacraments which he so greatly needs. Such treatment is still more necessary with those who fall more rarely into their wonted bad habits; as for instance every fortnight, or month. To delay absolution here for two or three months, would be total failure; inasmuch as a frequent reception of the Sacraments not only delivers such men from the bondage of their sins, but saves them from falling back into them. It is your part to strength-

en them by this means, which is the chief of all channels of grace, and the fittest method of strengthening souls against temptation. Such is the intention of the Church, as we find in the Roman Ritual; "In peccata facile recidentibus utilissimum erit consulere, ut sæpe confiteantur, et si expediat, communicent."

Precautions to be taken with relapsers.

CCCXL. If however you wish to feel sure before giving absolution, that your penitent has *notably* diminished the number of his faults, do not fix your mind on the material and arithmetical number, but rather on the substantial proofs of his will being true, earnest and effectual; bear in mind too his special circumstances and position. For instance, examine whether the cause of his relapses be rather human frailty than any intentional malice. The man whose sins are the result of a longstanding and deeply-rooted habit; or he who has naturally a perverse temperament which leads him into sin, or one who has gone through great struggles either from within or from without; may deserve more compassion and indulgence than another who has been guilty of an equal number of sins, but under different and more favourable circumstances. In the same way, there is generally less malice in easy rapid acts, such as interior consent to thoughts of hatred or impurity, than in exterior acts, which for the most part require more deliberate choice of will. Again, among exterior acts, there is less malice in such as are the work of a moment, relapses into sins of the tongue, blasphemies, oaths, injurious words, than in those which take more time and allow a

longer space for reflection; such as drinking to intoxication, or using the hands for an unlawful purpose; less malice in sinning alone than with another; in being seduced than in seducing. All such circumstances shew whether the penitent has an effectual and active will to amend, and consequently the fitting disposition for absolution. After due consideration, you must decide which will be most to his soul's profit, severity or indulgence; since there are persons who are timid, already inclined to despair, in great affliction, either temporal or spiritual; towards whom you ought to use great tenderness. It is well to give such persons a quarter or half an hour to seek contrition, or let them make such an act with you, so as to excite a suitable disposition for absolution. These men are like invalids who cannot bear to be dieted, but must be quickly sustained with abundant and satisfying food, i. e., absolution and communion; delay would only disturb, not strengthen the penitent; while others of a different character may well be disciplined by a more lengthened abstinence.

CCCXLI. Thus you may absolve a penitent who, from the habit of using bad language six times a day or more, has come only to use it, say once a day during a week; while you will do well to defer absolution to *him* who, from the habit of almost daily acts of sin, has come only to fall three times in the week; inasmuch as the first shews more effort and effectual will, relatively, than the second. But if the latter be in circumstances where delay may cause him any

How to estimate their amendment.

spiritual mischief; e. g., if he be suffering from any temporal affliction which you would be sorry to increase; or if he is going away, and is unlikely to repeat his confession, then absolve him, doing all in your power to excite him to a more effectual contrition, and to arm him against further relapses.

Mode of
treating
theyoung.

CCCXLII. Be specially careful in this matter with young men. Experience proves, that by treating them with cautious indulgence, and bringing them to frequent the sacraments, a confessor will certainly not hinder them from all sin, but he will help to lessen it far more than one who treats them as he would treat an older more formed man. If they are dismissed, young men will come but rarely to the sacraments, and here reason and experience go together. A young man in the flower of age has passions quite as strong as one who is older, but his conduct is less deliberate and matured; he is physically more inclined to vary from good to evil and from evil to good, and thus he requires to be treated with caution and indulgence, so long as he does not abuse it, and grow presumptuous.

On the
general
confes-
sions of
relapsers.

CCCXLIII. As to general confessions of relapsers, the lax confessor seldom or never requires them, holding confessions to be valid which have been followed by no amendment even for a short time, while the rigorist is perpetually exacting them, every relapse implying, as he thinks, former invalid confessions, even if a person have not relapsed until after a notable time. When hearing them, the first takes little heed of number

and circumstances, while the latter counts them all wearily over. But do you, as a discreet confessor, never press a general confession unless for a sure and well-founded reason, as in the case of the continual and deliberate concealment of some weighty sin, or at least of a well-founded doubt upon it; especially with people who come to you for the first time, and who consequently have not learned to have full confidence in you. If a penitent honestly believes that he has confessed all his sins, and does not feel bound to make a general confession, it will suffice to the forgiveness of his sins and renewal of grace, that he make his ordinary confession with universal contrition; by which I mean, a contrition which is applied to all present sins and to those which, after diligent self-examination, are not remembered. This makes all sure; while on the other hand, a general confession is difficult, and sometimes dangerous; difficult, because of the confused mass of subjects to be examined, and the shame of recalling forgotten stains; and dangerous, either by reviving former passions and temptations; or by arousing scruples, regrets and distress. Therefore never exact a general confession without being very sure of your ground.

CCCXLIV. In considering this ground how-
ever, you must avoid extremes of indulgence or severity. Be suspicious of confessions which have led to no amendment; if a man goes on making his confessions for long, and yet his serious faults continue undiminished, or almost so, especially if they are deliberate and such as he seeks himself,

On doubtful confessions.

you must mistrust him, and it is well to require him to make a general confession, for the sake of his soul. But where there is evident amendment, even though it be not continual or entire, you may feel confident that your penitent's confessions are valid, although he may fall again into his besetting sin. Do not confuse the results of a single confession with those of many; there is a great difference between giving a useful remedy once, and giving it frequently. We consider *that* to be a useful remedy in fever, which arrests the course of the disease, if it be but for a time; whereas it requires a frequent repetition of that same remedy to effect a cure; and in like manner, God does not always give an unlimited healing power to a single confession. Every good confession blots out all sins which are confessed with sincere repentance; but the consequences of such sins are not removed entirely, any more than are the penitent's weakness and tendency to relapse. A good confession lessens the power of a bad habit, but does not altogether conquer it; that is an ulterior result, which, in the ordinary course of God's providence, attends upon patient perseverance in confession, which thus gradually purifies and strengthens the soul, until it becomes firm and constant. And for this reason all the masters of the spiritual life have ever inculcated a diligent frequenting of the Sacraments.

On confessions presumably valid.

CCCXLV. Thus esteeming a confession valid, which is followed by notable amendment, do not insist upon a general confession. You can recommend it, but if the penitent is reluctant to make

it, be satisfied with urging him to supply the want indirectly by sincere contrition for all that is past and give him time to grow in spiritual strength. And in hearing any general confession, be satisfied with making your penitent state clearly three things; how long he has yielded to such and such a sin; how long he has been subject to fall; and such circumstances as are necessary to comprehend the nature of his sins. By this means you will attain a knowledge of his soul and its tendencies, what penances are most useful to him, and how far he is fit to receive absolution; and that, without a mere arithmetical computation of faults, which God in no way requires.

CCCXLVI. In dealing with backsliding penitents especially sensualists, it is a good thing to induce them 1) to use the Spiritual Exercises, and, if possible, to advise them to make a general confession, if they have never made one, or not for long; teaching them to prepare carefully during several days, with prayer, frequent acts of contrition, careful self-examination and some mortification. The consideration of all his faults will bring a salutary confusion to the sinner, will humble him, excite him to a more lively repentance, and fit him to receive such grace in the Sacrament as may save him from further falls. 2) As one of the best remedies is to go to the same confessor, you should advise one who falls very often to make his confession three times a week, or as often as he can; teaching him, night and morning, to make a brief resolution, such as, "My Saviour and Judge, Who hast prepared eternal

Remedy
for re-
lapsers

suffering for sinners, I prostrate myself before Thee, resolving by Thy help to abstain from such and such a sin, until this evening, or until to-morrow." Experience proves this to be a most useful act. 3) Urge your penitent to recommend himself often through the day to God, and to avoid exposing himself to temptation; if it should assail him, to resist instantly, before it gains a hold upon him, by remembering that God sees him, and may punish him while in the act of sin, as He has punished other men. 4) If he falls, advise him to come and confess it that very day, or at all events to come to you without waiting till he has fallen a second time; and in order that he may not be deterred by shame or carelessness, make him feel that you rejoice to see him come, not because he has sinned, but because of his earnestness in conquering his sin; and that, so far from being lowered in your esteem, his humility makes you care more for him. Exhort him from time to time not to postpone coming. Delay displeases God, encourages the devil, strengthens evil passions, and by lessening the penitent's shame of his faults and his desire to correct them, it increases his danger of hell. But on the contrary, a ready return to confession is acceptable to God, while it discomfits Satan, subdues passion, strengthens the penitent, purifying the past, and guarding the future. Tell him that, in spite of relapses, you have good hope of his final amendment and salvation, so long as he has the humility to come at once to confession. God revealed to one of His Saints that He greatly

loved certain souls which at times had fallen into grievous sin, because they were so speedy in their repentance. And that he may not be faint-hearted amid the difficulties of overcoming a bad habit, and grow to fancy his efforts all of no use, remind him often that it is certain that any one who prays diligently, with confidence, humility, and perseverance, obeying God's holy inspirations, will sooner or later obtain whatever is necessary to his salvation. Bid him therefore hope on, and he will assuredly correct his faults, as greater sinners than he have done, and meanwhile bid him recognise the result of his prayers and efforts, without which he would doubtless have fallen deeper, and might not have had time or grace to make his confession.

CCCXLVII. Again, where you find any sign of an extraordinary contrition in your penitent, you may safely absolve him. God's Mercy knows no bounds; He sometimes takes possession of a sinner's heart, undeserving as he may seem, and works therein a sudden but sincere change. When you see solid signs of this work of grace in a sinner, convincing you that he is really and heartily repentant, the presumption against him, arising from his bad life even up to this very time, is effaced by his present conversion, the tokens of which are not slight and doubtful, but clear and substantial.

How to act,
on extra-
ordinary
signs of
contrition.

If then a penitent comes to you saying: "Father, I am a grievous sinner, and this very morning I sinned, but while hearing the instruction given by a holy man, I was pierced with fear

and remorse, and I resolved to reform my life at whatever cost, be it what it may," and you see that like David, when Nathan convicted him of sin, such an one sincerely cries, "Peccavi," do not fear to imitate your Master. He has shewn the liberality of His grace in converting that soul; be you liberal in giving him the fruits of that justification and peace reserved for penitent sinners. "Si Deus benignus est, ut quid sacerdos erit austerus?" Do what seems good to you in exciting his contrition anew, prove his good will by some penance, which you can lighten afterwards, if you think it desirable. One has often known such persons to die shortly after being thus absolved, with every mark of acceptance with God. The Flemish Bishops, A.D. 1697, said, "Deum in conversione peccatoris non tam considerare mensuram temporis, quam doloris;" and long before them S. Leo the Great said, "Nullas patitur veniæ moras vera conversio, et in dispensandis Dei donis non debemus esse difficiles, nec accusantium se lacrymas gemitusque negligere, cum ipsam pœnitendi affectionem ex Dei credamus inspiratione conceptam."

On spiri-
tual exer-
cises and
missions.

CCCXLVIII. One of the most powerful agencies which God uses to bring about these miracles of grace, is in retreats and missions. From this you may learn, 1) when all your efforts for the conversion of a sinner seem unavailing, induce him to attend a retreat, or a mission, not partially, but steadily, and you will probably attain the desired end. 2) If you are a parish priest, do not neglect, over and above the good you

can do yourself among your people, to give them occasionally the extra help of missions. There are many sinners who only need to make the first step, in order to recover the right road; it may be the confession of some long-concealed sin, some restitution, or reconciliation, some occasion of sin that needs putting away, some victory over human respect which hinders his taking the side of religion, or becoming fervent in lieu of a continual lukewarmness in God's service. But he needs a special grace and some more than ordinary exciting cause, to move him to what is so difficult. And this is precisely what retreats and missions are calculated to do, when conducted by able and holy men. The novelty and the reputation of those who conduct missions, gives them an advantage over the ordinary preacher who has been heard continually; and the number of instructions, following close upon one another, do not give people time to grow cold: each sermon is a preparation for the next, and the last finishes and confirms the first. Truths, thus constantly preached during several days, take the heart as it were by storm, and end in complete victory. Thus a mission is no mere temporary treatment, but a methodical and complete system, which works a spiritual cure.

CCCXLIX. Experience proves, that conversions are numerous under a well-worked mission; and those who follow most or all the exercises, are mostly enabled to break through the bondage of sin. Some thus converted will persevere steadily; and even those who unhappily fall away again, have

learned a great deal. At least they have made a notable truce with God, for some weeks or months wherein they honour Him by acts of devotion and abstain from their wonted sins. This makes it easier for them once more to arise and cast away their chains, and be reconciled to God. Do what you can then, to give your flock the benefit of this great means of advancement; and be sure that you cannot suggest a better way of recalling a wanderer than inducing him to attend the services of a well-conducted mission.

ARTICLE VII.

Of habitual sinners and relapsing sinners.

Difference
between
habitual
sinners
and re-
lapsers.

CCCL^x. By habitual sinners I mean those who live in some habitual and unconfessed sin. These may receive absolution the first time that they confess it, if they have true contrition, and full purpose of employing efficacious means of correcting it. But if the habit be very inveterate, the confessor may also defer absolution, till he see whether the penitent will employ the means prescribed, and that he may conceive greater horror at his sin. Five falls in a month may constitute a bad habit when there is an outward occasion, and some interval between the falls. In heavier

^x S. Liguori n. 68—77.

sins, one fall in a month during a year suffices to this.

CCCLI. The relapsing, on the other hand, are those who, after confession, fall into the same sins, without amendment; and these cannot be absolved upon the ordinary tests of confession and protestation of repentance and intended amendment; as we see by Proposition 62, condemned by Innocent XI. Because a fixed habit and previous relapses without any amendment cast great doubt upon the sincerity of that repentance and good resolution which the penitent professes. Absolution must be deferred until such persons give a distinct sign of amendment. Some confessors who absolve such relapsed sinners indiscriminately, do incalculable mischief; their penitents lose all horror of sin, and continue to the end in their bad ways. Some theologians say that a relapsing sinner may be absolved three or four times, but I do not agree to this. In fact the habitual sinner who relapses even once after confession, without amendment, gives good reason for suspicion. And this rule is applicable to venial sins. No doubt we may more readily absolve those who fall again into the same venial sins, because the occasions of these are so much more frequent; but inasmuch as it is acknowledged to be a grave and sacrilegious sin to confess venial faults without repentance or intention to amend, and also that a general repentance without any special fault in view is imperfect, there is good reason to fear lest such confessions be invalid. Do not absolve such indiscriminately; but take care to bring them to true repentance for the

venial fault they abhor most, or make them confess a sin of their past life, so as to be sure there is fit matter for absolution; if not, defer it for a time.

What delay
should be
prescribed
to relaps-
ers.

CCCLII. I say for a time, as either in the case of serious or venial sins, it is not necessary to delay absolution for years or months, as the severe Juennin^y would teach. If the sin arises from intrinsic frailty, a week or ten days is usually sufficient; so says the learned author of the “^a Instructions pour les nouveaux Confesseurs,” imprinted at Rome. The author of “^a Instruction pour les Confesseurs de la campagne,” quotes Habert^b to the same effect; and Benedict XIV. exhorts Confessors thus; “^c Illos quantocius ut revertantur invitent, et ad sacramentale forum regressi absolutionis beneficio donentur.” At the longest, absolution may be delayed fifteen or twenty days; always excepting those who are fulfilling their Easter duties. These require a longer trial, as it may justly be suspected that they abstain from sin, more in order to avoid censure than from real desire of amendment. Those who fall through an immediate external occasion, also require a longer trial. But in no case, bid the penitent wait a month, if it is likely to discourage him. Tell him to return in a week or a fortnight, and so lead him gently until he is fit to receive absolution^d.

Extraor-
dinary
signs.

CCCLIV. Among the signs of extraordinary contrition, theologians reckon, 1) many tears, provided they proceed from true contrition; or words from the heart's depths, which sometimes are a more certain sign. 2) decrease of the number of faults; i.e. supposing the peni-

^y L. vi. n. 563.

^a P. i. c. 9. n. 215.

^a c. l. 4.

^b in prax. pœnit. iv. 417.

^c Bullar. T. iii. pp. 443. 22.

^d CCCLIII omitted as repetition.

tent to be in the same condition and subject to the same temptations, as before ; or if he only fell, after great struggle with the temptation. 3) Pains taken to correct himself, e. g. forsaking occasions of sin, practising the remedies prescribed, fasting, prayer, almsgiving, &c. 4) Seeking fresh remedies in order to self-correction, and ready promises to fulfil whatever is laid upon him ; but all promises must be dealt with cautiously, as they are easily made, but with difficulty performed. 5) Spontaneous confession, especially if it be made under difficulties ; as if the penitent made a long journey ; or deprived himself of some notable gain. 6) When the confession is made under some strong emotion, as after having heard some sermon, or the death of a relation, or for fear of some great scourge impending, as the plague, &c. 7) When the penitent accuses himself of grave sins, which have been kept back in his former confessions through shame. 8) When he testifies to having gained from the advice of his Confessor new knowledge and horror of his sin, and fear of his eternal perdition. Some add other signs : as, if the penitent accepts cheerfully a great penance, or declares that he repented as soon as he had committed the sin, or protests that he would die sooner than fall again into it. I do not say that such signs are enough of themselves, but they tend to confirm proofs of contrition which alone might be insufficient.

CCCLVI. In short, whenever you can fairly believe the will of the penitent to be changed, you may safely absolve him. It is true that the confessor ought first to be morally certain of his fit dis-

position ; but it must be observed that whereas, in the other Sacraments, the matter being physical the certainty also must also be physical: in the Sacrament of penance, the matter being moral, it is enough to have a moral or relative certainty ; that is, for the confessor to have a reasonable probability as to the penitent's disposition. Otherwise you could scarcely ever absolve any sinner : for all the signs given by penitents furnish a probability only as to their disposition. "We require no more," says the Author of the "Instruction" for new confessors "than a prudent judgment of the penitent's probable disposition. If the circumstances do not authorise a real doubt as to this, the confessor need not torment either his penitent or himself with seeking impossible evidence."

On the obligation to absolve when there are extraordinary signs.

CCCLVII. I have said that Absolution may be given to those who are in habitual sin, or who have relapsed, where they testify extraordinary contrition, but I do not say that it *must* be given. The confessor must exercise his judgement as to this. Of course a penitent who has made his confession has a right to absolution, but he has no right to it then and there; the Confessor may, in his character of physician, sometimes ought to delay giving it; but it is not usually expedient to use this treatment; and it ought not to be used without the penitent's consent, when the delay might do more harm than good, or might subject him to any danger of disgrace. The great missionary of our times, P. Leonard of Port Maurice, in his learned work printed at Rome, maintains that such delay is rarely of use. But on these points no

• Avertiss. aux confesseurs.

general rule can be laid down; the confessor must seek counsel of God, and act as He directs. My own opinion, and that held most commonly *communissima* by theologians^f is, that it is rarely wise to delay absolution when the penitent has fallen through intrinsic frailty, as in the case of anger, hatred, blasphemy, &c., if he have the right dispositions: inasmuch as we may hope more from the grace of the Sacrament than from deferred absolution.

CCCLVIII. I say *intrinsic frailty*; because he who falls through an extrinsic even though necessary occasion must be treated differently. In such a case the senses are more keenly excited, and the affection for sin becomes much stronger; and the penitent requires to do himself greater violence, not only to overcome the temptation, but to avoid the presence of that object which causes it, in order to change proximate into remote danger. Still more is this the case, when the occasion is voluntary and ought to be altogether removed; if absolution be given before this is done, we may fear that the penitent's resolution will fail. It is not so with him whose bad habits come from an intrinsic cause; the lack of an exterior object moving him to sin makes all the difference, and can neither retain or remove the occasion of sin; God will help him, and Sacramental grace is likely to be far more useful than deferred absolution; and will strengthen him to root out his bad habits. The Doctors of Salamanca ask, with reason^g, why we should hope more from deferred absolution to a sinner without grace, than

^f 22. q. 184. a. 8.

^g 3. p. q. 86. a. 5. ad 1.

from the grace of absolution to a friend of God? And Cardinal Tolet*, speaking of polluting vices, says, that no remedy is more effectual than frequent strengthening by the sacrament of Penance, without which nothing save a miracle is likely to reform a man. S. Philip Neri employed frequent confession as a cure especially for those, who relapsed into such sins. And the Roman Ritual says: “^bIn peccata facile recidentibus utilissimum fuerit consulere, ut sæpe confiteantur; et, si expediat, communicent.” Certainly here the words “facile recidentibus,” imply those who have not yet eradicated their habit of sin.

Of candidates for Holy Orders being habitual or relapsing sinners.

CCCLIX. These rules do not however apply to clerks who indulge in any vicious habits, especially, as regards impurity, and who aspire to Holy Orders. A layman living in habitual sin can be absolved whenever he has the necessary dispositions; but a candidate for Holy Orders must not only have those necessary to the Sacrament of Penance; he must also have the dispositions necessary to the Sacrament of Orders. One who is unfit to serve at the Altar, who is barely out of a state of sin, and is deficient in that positive holiness which is required for the important ministry to which he aspires, becomes voluntarily guilty by offering himself for Sacred Orders, without suitable dispositions; nor can his confessor absolve him, except he promise to abstain from Ordination until after a probation of some length, “at least of several months,” *plurimum mensium*. Theologians say that for the due reception of Holy Orders, it does not suffice a man to possess an ordinary holi-

* L. vi. n. 57 and 461.

^b Vie, P. i. c. 15. n. 360.

ness; i. e. to be merely free from mortal sin; but that he needs a special holiness, such as has purified him from evil habits. Thus S. Thomas says; "Holy Orders require holiness as a condition. The burden then of Orders is only to be laid on walls already dried by holiness from all moisture of vices." This is because a candidate who does not possess such special holiness is unworthy to be raised above other men to handle the sublime mysteries of the Altar. "As they," continues S. Thomas, "who *receive* Orders are raised above the people by the elevation of orders, so let them be superior in holiness." And elsewhere he assigns the same reason in still stronger terms; "Because by holy Orders one is deputed to those ministries of highest dignity, by which service is done to Christ Himself in the Sacrament of the Altar, for which greater inward holiness is required than even for the religious life."

CCCLX. We may except the case wherein such a candidate should receive from God the gift of so special a compunction, as might altogether heal him; as says S. Thomas; "^kSometimes God converts the heart of man with such vehemence, that suddenly he obtains perfectly spiritual holiness." Such conversions are rare; but supposing a candidate for Holy Orders to receive from an All-merciful God such grace as should change him altogether, so that he be filled with exceeding horror for sin, and strengthened to resist temptation; and moreover that he be resolved not merely to shun vice and the occasions of it, but also to take every means of living as a good priest should live; that he earnestly

ⁱ De Pœnit. c. 5. n. in 67 fin.

^k L. v. c. 13.

intreats the gift of perseverance, and has great faith in God's love, so that there is a moral certainty of a change in his life; he is capable of absolution, and of receiving Holy Orders at once. Nevertheless a confessor would do well to induce such a man to delay receiving Ordination until he has entirely got rid of his bad habits, and fulfilled his good resolutions; or even as physician of souls, he might do well to defer absolution, so as to oblige the man not to present himself for Ordination. This however should not be enforced, if such a delay exposes the penitent to disgrace. But confessors ought to be as strict as possible with such Candidates, who often turn out badly, and bring great harm to the Church and to their flocks¹.

Scrutiny of
the mo-
tives of
candidates
for Holy
Orders.

CCCLXI^m. Examine closely the motives which lead men to seek Holy Orders. Ask those who seek to be numbered among the Priests of Christ, what motive leads them to seek this holy calling? whether their relations have urged it upon them as an expedient mode of provision for themselves and others; or a likely way of doing well in this world? And warn any such unhappy youth to think better of it, or to seek some other profession. Tell them that, in entering the Priesthood, they must have but one object; that of devoting themselves wholly to God, giving themselves up unreservedly to His service, and seeking eternal life in so doing. Otherwise this most sacred office will but lead them to Hell. Confessors may doubtless absolve a Clerk who is liable to bad habits, if he gives special signs of true contrition; if he has good hopes of amendment by God's grace and

¹ In Vita, c. vi, n. 2. ^m B. Leonard n. 6. and 8. P. ii. 14.

a resolute will to put in practice every means thereto. But a firm resolution to amend is not enough to justify a man's venturing to receive Holy Orders: he must further believe most sincerely that by God's grace he will be able to conquer his bad habits. Such a belief is not necessary before receiving the Sacrament of Penance; because the heart may be firmly resolved as to some amendment concerning which the mind is yet doubtful; but it is necessary to one offering himself to Holy Orders; for otherwise the candidate would be undertaking a profession, the duties of which he does not believe himself capable of fulfilling; and thus weighing himself down with a burden which he cannot bear by reason of his evil habits, he exposes himself to the risk of committing a succession of sacrileges. Who can dare to say that such a man should be ordained? or if he himself persists in offering himself, how can a Confessor absolve him? What then must be done?

Examine your candidates carefully, and when they prove to be covered with spiritual sores, be honest with them; say, "my brother, it is not enough to promise a future abstinence from sin, or to make great exertions to conquer your bad habits, so as by God's grace wholly to amend. Take my advice, wait and try the strength of your resolutions, before seeking deacon's orders, much more those of the Priesthood." If he refuses to submit and, notwithstanding his evil habits, which give reason to fear that he could not live in chastity, persists in desiring Ordination, send him away as unworthy of Absolution. O the blindness of youth! Be counselled by me: if you have not the grace of chastity, the ecclesiastical state

is not for you: the yoke that you would carry, would be to you a yoke of fire for all eternity. Think well of it.

Of the Absolution of habitual sinners and of relapsing sinners.

CCCLXII. But to return to ordinary penitents; a wise confessor must ascertain whether his penitent be an habitual sinner or a relapsing; whether he is in proximate occasion of sin, and if he knows exactly what things are *necessary* as means. In order to give you, not private opinion, but moral principles adopted by doctors commonly and supported by the Fathers, I would refer to three condemned propositions, which will be our best guide, and throw great light on our decisions. 1) "Pœnitenti habenti consuetudinem peccandi contra legem Dei, naturæ, aut Ecclesiæ, etsi emendationis spes nulla appareat, nec est neganda, nec differenda absolutio, dummodo ore proferat se dolere, et proponere emendationem." 2) "Potest aliquando absolvi, qui in proxima occasione peccandi versatur, quam potest, et non vult omittere: quinimo directe, et ex proposito quærit, aut ei se ingerit." 3) "Absolutionis capax est homo quantumvis laboret ignorantia mysteriorum fidei, et etiamsi per negligentiam, etiam culpabilem, nesciat mysterium sanctissimæ Trinitatis et Incarnationis Domini nostri Jesu Christi." Thus the three heads of the infernal hydra which drew so many souls into hell through this false doctrine, are cut off.

Let us analyse these propositions, so as to bring the truth to light. The first relates to habitual sinners. I ask you why the proposition is condemned which would never delay absolving a penitent, although habitually relapsing, as long as he says with his lips that he repents and has a firm purpose to amend?

Doubtless it is only because a wise confessor in his quality of judge and physician of souls, before pronouncing sentence, ought to form a prudent and probable opinion that the penitent has the necessary interior disposition without which the absolution is null and the Sacrament becomes useless.

Now as the frequent falls and relapses of a backsliding and habitual sinner furnish a strong presumption that he really lacks the interior disposition of true contrition and firm purpose, the very subject-matter for the sacrament, this proposition is justly condemned as rash, erroneous and scandalous. The reason of this is clearly given by S. Thomas, who says distinctly that the confessor "cannot bind or loose at his own will but only as is prescribed to him by God". The holy doctor desires it to be the confessor's aim to form this prudent and probable judgement of the penitent's disposition before absolving him. But since God alone seeth the heart, whilst man knows its secrets only by certain outward indications, our object will be best attained by giving some hints whereby confessors may recognise these signs. It will be their part to determine in what cases it is expedient to absolve, or to defer absolution, in obedience to the Church which expressly forbids their being guided by the condemned proposition.

Seven signs may be specified in favour of habitual sinners and seven which are against them. I premise that a sinner who relapses habitually into any kind of sin, whether they be actual sins into which he falls frequently, perjury, blasphemy, hatred, im-

^a Part iii. q. 18. art. 3, 4.

purity, theft and the like; or such as are only negative, in that he wilfully neglects restitution of his neighbour's property, good name, or honour, fails to execute pious bequests &c., may commonly be absolved if the confessor discerns in him some of the following signs whereon to ground a prudent judgement of his interior disposition.

Signs in
favour of
relapsing
and habi-
tual sin-
ners.

CCCLXIII. 1) If the sinner has never been re-proved or warned by a confessor, and if, now that he is for the first time clearly instructed, he promises from his heart to correct himself, and accepts willingly any kind of penance, preservative or satisfactory, thus testifying a firm resolution of amendment; 2) if he manifests a special sorrow, if he confesses with tears, provided they spring from supernatural motives, and are neither the effect of a soft heart, nor of affliction, nor of other transitory causes, but one can see that it is truly God Who touches him and makes him hate his sins; 3) if he makes a confession in time of a mission or retreat, from having heard a sermon or meditation which has moved him to fear the judgement of God and to determine seriously to change his life. He must be judged differently if notwithstanding these moving causes he gives no sign of compunction; still more so, if during these holy days, he goes on sinning without any amendment. 4) If, warned previously by other confessors, he has used the prescribed remedies, and has corrected himself partly, diminishing the number of his falls; 5) if he comes to confession after some sad event, or because he has heard of the death of some obstinate sinner, above all if such was a companion; or because a calamity has happened either to himself or others

which he can only regard as God's chastisement of his sins, or the like motives; 6) if being inwardly inspired to seek a good confessor, he willingly throws himself at his feet, not because it is Easter, or because his parents or his master or others have sent him &c., but solely because he feels himself animated with a lively desire to change his life and to place himself in God's favour; 7) at the point of death, or in probable danger of death, because then it may be presumed that every one has a care for his salvation and sincerely purposes to amend.

There is no doubt that in the preceding cases the confessor may have sufficient ground to judge of the penitent's good interior disposition, and may absolve him, because there is hope of amendment. Thus we do not follow the bad doctrine of the condemned proposition, that absolution is to be given though there is no hope of amendment. Still there are doctors of repute who maintain with reason that even in such cases it is allowable to defer absolution for the greater good of the penitent; but usually this is not expedient in practice, above all if one fears that the poor penitent, provoked and frightened, might fall into despair and forsake the Sacraments.

CCCLXIV. Such are the signs of a heart truly touched by compunction. It remains to examine those which denote the insincere penitent, whom no one can absolve without disobeying the Church. 1) If, after having been reproved two or three times by a zealous confessor and warned of his evil state, the penitent returns always with the same number, perhaps with a greater number of relapses into the same sin, and if one can neither see nor hope for

Unfavour-
able signs.

any amendment ; 2) if he manifest no greater hatred of sin than heretofore, and one clearly knows that it is his lips only which detest evil and not his heart; 3) if, without troubling himself about having neglected them, he has made little account of the remedies which the same confessor has repeatedly given him ; 4) if hitherto he has always lived in the same negligence, and if, wholly taken up with the gratification of his passions he has never done anything to correct himself; if even, by strengthening his bad habits, he has shewn that he is little concerned about his eternal salvation ; 5) if he comes to confession by compulsion, or because it is Easter ; or because he is sent by his master or others ; or is in the habit of frequenting the Sacrament once a week, or other like motives, founded on human respect, with little or no intention of a change of life or of fulfilling his duty as a good Christian ; 6) if he excuses his faults, argues with his confessor, will not accept the penance, manifests no teachableness, or even shews himself incorrigible and obstinate in his evil courses ; 7) finally, if you observe in him a great inclination to the sin, so violent a passion, that you see he is strongly attached to it ; so that you could not prudently credit his protestations of repentance, but must rather regard so marked an inclination as a proof that he is not really contrite.

You will agree that these signs clearly displayed enable me confidently to decide that if the confessor, in the cases enumerated above, weighing well the circumstances, can form no probable judgement of his penitent's disposition, much more if he think him unprepared, he ought to refuse him absolution.

If he doubts, he should have recourse to charitable admonitions, to fervent exhortations, in order to prepare him. If the doubt continues, he should defer absolution till the penitent give more sure indication of his disposition.

CCCLXV. This difficulty removed, we see the error of certain confessors who would make one general rule on a subject which does not admit of it. To say that one ought always to give absolution to relapsers, or that one ought always to defer it, are two propositions equally false, ill-founded and scandalous. The first especially should be absolutely rejected.

Mistake of
certain
confessors.

After all, everything must depend upon the wisdom of the confessor, who must be guided neither by his inclination, his nature, his interest, nor the example of others; but solely by God's Holy Spirit, conveyed to him in the exercise of diligent study and prayer. . . . yet, the experience of many years has taught me that a great number of confessors have an extreme inclination to give absolution on the spot, without examining the state of their penitent, without warning him, without exciting him, without, so to say, putting him to the trouble of amendment. Hence the ruin of a multitude of souls, who, accustomed to sin, seek only to get absolution from a careless priest, in order to return to their previous disorders. Scarcely are they absolved, when they cast themselves anew into the mire of sin, "sleep their sleep," and at length "in a moment go down to hell." I should betray my conscience if I did not tell you my opinion, it is this: these con-

* Ps. lxxvi. 5.

P Job xxi. 13.

fessors damn themselves, and through them the Catholic world falls to ruin. How can we think that a confessor has fulfilled his duty who, having heard his penitent's confession, sees him surrounded by a crowd of vices and irregularities, yet does not question or help him, does not seek to discover the cause of his falls, how long he has grovelled in the slough of sin, or strive to provide him with remedies proportioned to his ills? When the demoniac child, of whom we read in the Gospel of S. Mark, was brought to our Lord, He hastened to inquire how long he had been in this state? And the father answered, "Lord, from a child^a." It is a grievous error of confessors not to inquire into the length of time a habit of sin has lasted? Many a sinner would answer, "From a child." And yet even to such, without the slightest token of compunction or intention of amendment, absolution is given at once, as it were, on hap-hazard! Cardinal de Lugo says; "Since the confessor is both judge and physician, he ought to know the state of the penitent in relation to his past habits, that he may know what medicine is to be applied in this present instance, and whether he need delay of absolution and might at last be thus cured^r." With other doctors, he would, according to the rule laid down above, defer absolution in the case of a sinner who, after repeated warnings, still shews no symptoms of repentance, until he conceives a more fitting horror of sin, and an effectual resolution of amendment. Let those confessors who are ready to give indiscriminate absolution consider this. How can we believe a will

^a S. Mark ix. 20.

^r De Lug. disp. 14, l. 175.

to be effectual which takes no means to secure the end? Verily, this is not to bring to confession a firm purpose graven on marble, nor even on wax, but written on water; be assured that this is one of the gravest faults of our day in the administration of the Sacrament of penance, that it is the road by which a number of Christians go down to hell. These unstable souls are they of whom S. Peter speaks, as "cursed children which have forsaken the right way." Surely at the last day, their blood will be required at the hand of those careless confessors, who from their lack of zeal, have slain both their own souls, and those of other men.

CCCLXVI. It may be said, that to refuse absolution is an extreme measure; not to be used until all others have been tried. But in the case I have mentioned where there is no sufficient indication of a true compunction, and where a careful confessor can form no probable judgement that there is a true disposition, it is the only remedy; not to use it, is to fail in duty as a skilful judge and physician of souls. I grant that it is to be wished that penitents could be moved by a fervent exhortation, but sinners sunk in the mire of vice, who are scarcely touched by the terrible truths of a mission, will not be converted by a few fleeting words.

Indeed I suspect the question arises from a desire to despatch matters quickly, to console all the world, and to give absolution without troubling one's self as to the fitness or unfitness of the penitent. Now, is not this directly to set at nought the decrees of the Church which forbid so scandalous a practice? And

• 2 S. Pet. ii. 14.

who would not weep to see the ruin of so many souls? Alas! they vehemently condemn the few who defer absolution, but there is neither tongue nor pen to enlighten a multitude of careless confessors who do no more than raise the hand and utter the words of absolution.

It startles you to hear me speak of a multitude of careless confessors? Come with me to a mission and listen to the confessions. Out of every hundred penitents 80 sometimes, or more will be the slaves of vicious habits; some of blasphemy, perjury; others of impurity, theft, hatred, evil thoughts. Ask any one; he will tell you that he has lived thus for 8, 10, 20, years; falling two or three times a week, sometimes even daily into the same fault, always confessing it; that he has been sometimes to one, sometimes to another confessor, and, in the course of all these years to every confessor in the place and neighbourhood, as he found it convenient, and always received absolution. Ask him, "But before absolving you, what did they say to you?" He will say, "they told me not to relapse." "But did no one tell you the danger of your state? Did they give you no remedies? Did they take no pains to excite your heart to contrition?" He will answer; "Two or three gave me some little advice and then absolved me; the others absolved me without a word."

Poor murdered souls! This one penitent reveals to you the laxity of nearly all the confessors of that place and neighbourhood. Perhaps out of four score persons, plunged in habitual sin, more than three-score and ten have been lost through these ignorant and lukewarm confessors. This dialogue may

seem to be a fable—Would to God it were not founded on constant and mournful experience!

The pious Cardinal Bona justly deplotes conduct so injurious to souls. He says “^mThrough this false charity, this detestable compliance, the majority of Christians pass their lives in a perpetual disorder, and endless alternation between Sacraments and sins, confessions and relapses.” To these sad words may be added those of another Cardinal, no less pious and learned. Bellarmine, considering that the too great easiness in giving absolution without regard to the penitent’s disposition, was the ruin of souls, has pronounced emphatically, “there would not now be such readiness to sin, if there were not also such readiness to absolve.”

CCCLXVII. Then what is to be done? This is the all-important point. Let confessors agree to pursue a uniform course in the administration of this great Sacrament, upon which depends the fruit of missions and consequently the general welfare. That you may be convinced, listen to what happened in a town where God’s holy name was, as it were, trodden under foot, great part of the inhabitants being in the habit of uttering the most frightful blasphemies, and that with a publicity so scandalous as to excite horror. God put into the heart of some zealous Religious who dwelt there, to urge upon all the confessors a mutual combination to put down the enormity which, gaining ground daily, threatened to overrun the whole country. They agreed that if any of these blasphemers came to confession without giving special signs of repentance,

General course to be followed with habitual sinners and relapsers.

^m Princip. Vitæ Christ. c. xv.

they would defer absolution for a week imposing a suitable penance, accompanied with an earnest exhortation on the grievousness of the sin.

There falls a feast of the Blessed Virgin. These blasphemers come to accuse themselves of their sins and to ask for absolution. "Good, my son," said the confessor, "for the love of Jesus keep yourself from blaspheming for 8 or 10 days, do such a penance, and come to me again; then I will absolve you; fear not, my son, I will comfort you, I will not scold you, I will receive you with the greatest tenderness &c."—"How father, you do not give me absolution?" "Not now, my son." "But it is a feast of the Blessed Virgin. I wish to communicate." "I know it, but be patient; in a week I will absolve you, and you will communicate." "Father, you surprise me, I shall go to some one else." He goes and meets with the like reception. The same thing happening to the others, they were seen, sad and dejected, saying amongst themselves, "Oh! how grievous must be the sin! nobody will absolve us; how grievous the sin must be!" The people conceived such horror of blasphemy, that a month later it was unheard of in that country.

As for many sinners their fault is more of the head than of the will; they do not comprehend the enormity of deadly sin. Now, to awaken them and lead them to enter into themselves, there is nothing better than to delay absolution for a few days; believe me, it is one of the most effectual methods of setting a wanderer in the right way again. The delay, however short, has mostly the effect of a fire-brand which, seasonably applied, rouses the patient

from a lethargy which was near becoming the sleep of death. The penitent is ashamed, learns his danger, reflects upon it, takes measures to escape from it. The delay touches him with compunction, and, if he has contrition, signally augments it. Thus his repentance, till then so languid that it would easily have yielded to the allurements of any present object, is strengthened, and withstands the most formidable assaults. At length it carries the day, obtains a complete amendment and makes the sinner less liable to fall back. So true is it that "there would not now be such readiness to sin if there were not such readiness to absolve."

CCCLXVIII. Nevertheless it must not be an unvarying rule to refuse absolution to habitual sinners. The confessor must exercise his discretion in each case, and see whether his penitent gives sufficient indications of interior fitness for him to absolve him, agreeably with what we have said above; if he perceives no such signs, it is wise to defer it. The exercise of such caution would not turn our confessionals into torture-rooms, but into tribunals of mercy; for how can we shew greater mercy to a penitent, than by taking the best means to open his heart to grace? St. Bernard refused absolution to a great man who was given to impurity, only granting him absolution at the end of some weeks, when he shewed signs of real amendment^a. S. Francis Xavier used to dismiss such people for some days, during which to examine themselves and learn to abhor sin. S. F. de Sales, the tenderest of all hearts, wept over an obstinate sinner, who gave no sign of compunc-

^a In Vita, Lib. vi. c. 17.

tion, saying, "My son, I weep, because you weep not, and I would have you take time to prepare yourself better." Such has always been the course of God's holiest servants, and it accords strictly with the spirit of the Church. Even if such men go away, and do not return, you will have sown a seed of holy fear in their hearts, which, in time, may bring forth the fruits of repentance. The learned Aversa says that such delay is most useful to the penitent; "It is certain from experience that this delay is often of use."

Counsel
and prac-
tice of S.
Philip
Neri as to
different
kinds of
penitents.

CCCLXIX. S. Philip Neri when dealing with grievous sinners who were a prey to bad habits, used to begin with urging them to abstain from mortal sin, and so, little by little, to lead them on. He once cured a dissolute youth by gently requiring him to say a prayer seven times a day, kissing the ground, and saying, "To-morrow I may be a dead man."

The scrupulous.

As to scruples, he used to say that if the scrupulous person had once decided that he had not consented to a temptation, he ought not to return to the subject, as such a return often renews temptation. But inasmuch as many people are tormented by a scruple, as to whether they did consent or not, especially in the matter of evil thoughts, he gave as a rule, 1) to see whether at the moment of temptation the person had preserved a strong love for the opposite virtue, and a hatred for the vice, in which case there is every reason to suppose that he did not consent. 2) Whether (knowing that it is a great sin to swear positively to a thing doubt-

• De Pœnit. q. 17, sect. 12.

ful) he could take his oath, that he did or did not consent. If he would not swear, it is a good proof that he did not consent.

Besides the usual rule of referring himself altogether to the confessor's judgement, he gave another, which was to despise scruples. He would accordingly forbid scrupulous penitents to come so frequently to confession, in order to accustom them to forget their scruples. When in the confession they came to their scruples, he would send them away to communicate, without hearing any more. He used to say that scruples are a disease, which may make a truce but rarely peace, and is never cured save by humility.

With respect to love of this world, he continually repeated to his penitents his own favourite maxim, "All the love that we give to creatures, is so much taken from God." A young man, named Francis Spazzara, was giving himself up eagerly to the study of the law; he neglected nothing to perfect himself in it, hoping so to attain the highest offices of the Pontifical Court. One day S. Philip called him aside, and caressing him, discussed his grand projects, at each fresh vision of future greatness exclaiming, "How fortunate you are! and afterwards? Now you study; soon you will be a Doctor, and you will begin to make money; you will advance your family; you will become an Advocate; and you may one day come to be a Prelate. How fortunate you are!" Thus he went on through the long list of imaginary promotions and honours, which the world could give him, always repeating; "How fortunate you are!" Francis never doubted

The ambitious.

Y

that the Saint was speaking seriously. But at the end, Philip pressed him to his heart and whispered "And afterwards?" These two words sank into the young man's soul, so that, returning home, he began to say, "I am toiling now for this world, *And afterwards?*" So he reviewed all his projects and all that long course of greatness, which he had pictured to himself, yet could not get out of his mind those two words, "*And afterwards!*" Convinced of the nothingness of all earthly grandeur, he resolved to turn all his thoughts to God; he entered the congregation of the Oratory where he lived and died holily.

His advice
to Con-
fessors
and to
penitents.

CCCLXX. S. Philip advised Confessors not to guide their penitents in the same way in which they had been guided themselves. For Confessors, who are drawn to certain pious exercises or meditations, ruin the healthiness of their penitents. He used to say that it was often useful to stop people from their usual pious exercises, either as a rest, or as a mortification, if they were much attached to them. He disapproved of penitents lightly changing their confessors, or of confessors readily receiving (certain cases excepted) the penitents of others. If a penitent came to him, (who had a confessor) S. Philip would send him back to him.

He used to tell penitents not to torment their Confessor for leave to do that which he could not approve; and that, when they could not have recourse to him, they ought to act as they knew he would wish, telling him every thing afterwards. He forbade them bodily mortifications without their Confessor's permission, since by using them of their

own will, they either injure their health, or foster spiritual pride, and expose themselves to the danger of resting in the means rather than in the end, viz: the love of God and of our neighbour, and interior mortification.

He did not approve of penitents making vows without the consent of their spiritual Father, and himself rarely granted that permission, on account of the great risk of breaking them. If they made them, he induced them to make them, under the condition of their remembering them. He did not readily consent to a change of condition of life; preferring generally that each should abide in the vocation to which God had first called him, if he could live in it without sin. In the midst of the world you may, he used to say, seek after perfection; neither the arts nor manual labour are hindrances in the service of God.

He used to counsel women to stay at home, take care of their household, and not go much into the world. He was once praising a certain lady so highly, that his disciples enquired what were her special merits? "She spins;" was the reply, alluding to the words of Holy Scripture; "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her fingers hold the distaff." He forbade people to set aside their religious exercises on every trifling occasion, but he objected to a great number of pious practices, which expose people to the risk of growing weary, and either giving them up, or performing them without devotion.

He rather advised his penitents to undertake little, but never to leave that undone; for if the devil succeeds once in making us neglect a religious prac-

P Prov. xxxi. 19.

tice, he will easily do so again and again, until he makes us abandon it altogether. He was fond of repeating, "Nulla dies sine linea." S. Philip urged persons to be very watchful over little faults, because if these are neglected, the conscience grows hardened, and we slide easily into greater faults. "Renew your resolutions frequently," he used to add, "and never be disheartened by the temptations which assail them. Have trust in God Who is always the same, and fear nothing; when He means to train you in any special virtue, He often allows you to be tempted in that very quarter; so, as soon as you feel the temptation, remember the consolations you have formerly felt in prayer, and you will soon be victorious."

In regard to the young, he used to say that it was equally necessary to shun bad society, frequent that which was good, and frequently to receive the Sacraments. He did not easily trust to their perseverance, even when they exhibited great piety. "Wait till they have got their feathers," he was wont to say, "and we shall see how they will fly then?" adding that it is easy to move all sorts of people to a great temporary warmth of pious feeling, but the important matter is to teach them perseverance.

ARTICLE VIII.

Treatment of the Sick and Dying.

CCCLXXI. When summoned to one who is in danger of death, it would be grievous laxity, suppos-

ing there to be yet time and strength, not to exact all parts of the Sacrament, integrity of accusation, sincere repentance &c. Indeed this is the moment when, more than ever, you must combine charity, skill, and careful precision for the benefit of the sick; for if you are mistaken now, the mistake is irreparable; but if you win for him grace to die well, the fruit of your labour is secured for ever. On the other hand it would be a most mistaken severity to require those delays and proofs of contrition, which you would rightly exact from one laden with faults and bad habits, were he in health. By so doing you might easily plunge the sick man into despair, to which, at this last moment, he is but too liable; the more so since the devil strives in every way to lead him to it. Already weighed down with sickness and the fear of death, he is in no condition to be still further troubled by being refused Absolution.

Do you ask, how you can safely give it to one who has been seized by sickness in the very midst of his sins? I grant that it is a most difficult case. But I still repeat, that to refuse absolution to this soul in the greatest of all needs, is of all things the most injurious to it. As father and physician, you should first try all other means. Remember all that has been said concerning those sinners who, while in health, require speedy absolution; and only make this difference now, viz., in order not to fatigue the sick man, be very cautious, speak gently, and pause from time to time. In order to ensure *formal* integrity you should be most particular in satisfying yourself as

to his sincerity, but no less discreet must you be as to the *material* integrity, in order not to tire the patient with lengthy questions and examination.

If he be not in danger of immediate death, possibly you may see your way to defer absolution for some hours. On such an occasion as this, you must implore God's help with your whole heart, and you would do well to promise to God something notable, in order to snatch this prey from the devouring wolf. Do not let the sick man discover your anxiety, but begin by inspiring him with hope of pardon, since God has not cut him off suddenly; and by this means move him to a sincere self-accusation. With respect to sorrow for sin, you can make use of his illness itself, speaking of it not so as to frighten him, as if he were already in a hopeless state; but at the same time without giving any false hope, so that a certain fear of death may help to produce such a repentance, as may secure his eternal salvation. Take care not to frighten him by severe penances.

CCCLXXII^a. When time is short, and the sick man very weak, it would be most unwise to spend so much time upon material integrity, as to run the risk of not having enough for the most important part, contrition; or if while satisfying yourself of his sorrow, you should be in danger of not having time to give absolution. In such a case you have the greatest need of prudence and discretion, always beginning with what is of the first consequence, and seeking contrition rather than integrity of accusation. If the patient

^a Prêtre sanctifié n. 78, 79.

be unable to give any positive sign of contrition or accusation, you must still do every thing in your power for his soul's safety. Give him absolution "*sub conditione*," as you can do no more, and as by God's grace, the dying man may perhaps have an interior fitting disposition. As to external signs, although he may be able to give none save his laboured breath, that, in itself, may be taken as an adequate sign by which he would ask for absolution, as has not unfrequently been the case; or indeed it may be presumed in the case of all those who have lived as Christians, unless we are certain of the contrary. In such cases, absolution "*sub conditione*" ensures at once all due reverence to the Sacrament, and provides for the patient's need.

Mgr. de Grammont, Archbishop of Besançon, once published an ordinance forbidding priests to give absolution to the dying if they had not asked for it previously, and did not give any formal sign of confession: for fear of risking the validity of the Sacrament. The Archbishop was himself seized with an illness, in which he earnestly desired to confess, but was wholly unable to make known his ardent, sincere, inward desire, by any word or sign. Upon his recovery he published a fresh ordinance, in which he revoked what he had said before, and ordered Absolution to be given even to the dying, if they had lived Christian lives, though they shewed no formal and visible sign of desiring it, and had not expressed any wish to make Confession; on the ground that it was quite possible for grace to work the necessary acts in their hearts without the sufferers having any power to give any particular sign

of it; proving his assertion by his own experience. Be sure that in such a case God will not require you to ascertain the acts made by the penitent, but rather that He requires you to fulfil your duty by giving Absolution, at all events "sub conditione."

CCCLXXIII^r. When you are summoned to a dying man, do not make a great point of the number and circumstances of sin, especially where the doctor says there is no time to lose, and the Viaticum has to be administered. In such a case it is better to attend chiefly to the penitent's interior dispositions, and you will enjoin him to repeat his confession, in the event of his recovery. Let his penance be very light; give another proportioned to his faults hereafter, if he should recover; or you may bid him, for penance, come to you when he is well again. In the case of wounded persons or women in their confinement, who cannot commonly be left by their attendants, it is enough if they accuse themselves generally of their sins, and of some slight special fault, such as impatience, exaggeration &c., with the resolution of making a full confession when restored to health. If the dying man is bound to make any restitution which can be done at once, urge his doing so himself at once: he must not leave it to be done by his heirs: else do not give him absolution^a.

Import-
ance of
assisting
the sick.

CCCLXXIV. No work of charity is more acceptable to God or useful to the salvation of souls than assisting the sick in their last hour; when their eternal destiny is at stake, the powers of hell redouble

^r S. Alphonso n. 101-103 and 233-275.

^a See the author of the *Instruction pour les confesseurs des villages*, c. xiv. p. 444.

their efforts, and the dying are less capable of resistance by themselves. Our Lord permitted S. Philip Neri several times to see angels suggesting words to pious priests who were ministering to the dying, as a proof of His love for their work. It is the work of all priests, parochial or other. The Roman Ritual speaks of it as one of the principal duties of a parish-priest. He is ordered to go *himself*, as soon as he hears that any parishioner is ill, without waiting to be sent for; and to go often, if the sick man be morally sick as well. If he cannot go himself, he is to send some holy and wise priest in his place; for some clergy do more harm than good to the sick, to themselves, and to the relations around, whose spiritual welfare is to be considered also. The Ritual adds, that if no priest can be had, the pastor should at all events send some pious and good layman who can help the sick man by suggesting good thoughts to him.

CCCLXXV. 1) The Priest should privately ascertain from the doctor whether the sick man's illness is hopeless; I say privately, because of the detestable custom physicians have of deceiving their patients; for fear of incurring their displeasure, or that of their relations.

2) The Priest should ascertain from the relations and friends, or from the sick man himself, what he is, his character and faults; to what passions he is subject; whether he owes to any man restitution of property or reputation; and whether he has any hatred or criminal connexion with any one, in order that such may be remedied. But it is better not to recall any such persons to his mind,

Advice to
the assist-
ing priest.

unless it be necessary. In the case of bodily injuries received, the Priest will see that the patient forgives those who have hurt him, without inquiring who they may be, or how it was done. If the sufferer speaks of this, the Priest will lead him away from the subject. In the same way, the Priest will check all unnecessary conversation with respect to his property, legal affairs, or his family, or any worldly subjects which tend to disturb his mind.

3) Having ascertained that the illness is dangerous, the Priest will not begin the subject of confession, but will rather speak about the sick man's disease and his sufferings. Then he will exhort him to resign himself to God's will, to unite his pains to those borne by our Saviour on the Cross, and to offer all such pains in expiation for his sins. By degrees he will approach the subject of confession, inquiring how long it is since he confessed? And while teaching him to put his trust in God, Who can raise him up if He sees fit, the Priest will gently make him aware that his illness is serious, and advise him to prepare, while his mind is clear, to make a good confession, which may even help to restore bodily health, if God sees it to be desirable for his salvation. It is related that a dying person, while confessing, rose from his bed; and that a gentleman, in whose case all remedies had failed, confessed and was cured.

If the sick
desires
delay.

CCCLXXVI. If the sick man desire delay, and there be no imminent danger of death, lethargy or delirium, it may be permitted; but time for his confession should be fixed, say that evening,

or the next morning. If the danger be imminent, the Priest should remind him of what S. Augustine says, that "God has indeed promised forgiveness to the penitent sinner, but He has not promised a morrow to him: perhaps He will give it, perhaps He will not give it." If the sick man persists in refusing to make his confession, [and he have evidently some weighty matter on his conscience] the Priest must not give up till the last, warning him, and urging motives of fear or trust; and praying for him both privately and publicly.

4) If the illness be serious, the patient must be moved to put his temporal affairs in order, for the sake of his family, and still more for his conscience sake, if that be involved. But the priest must take the greatest pains in all that concerns this, to avoid any possible suspicion of personal interest. If the sick man has brothers or sisters in real want, he should be warned that he is bound to provide sufficiently for them "*sub gravi*;" but this obligation does not extend to more distant relations*. The priest should advise nothing which can injure another: for it ill becomes the minister of Christ to incur the hatred of any one.

5. The Ritual warns priests not to distract the sick man by talking too much or too loud. Such rather weary the sick, than comfort them. The P. Rempito of the Company of Jesus, records how that he himself, when once in danger of death, could not hear what was said, but was only conscious of a wearying and confused noise around; so that he was obliged to ask for a little rest.

* Lib. ii. n. 946.

6. The Priest should take care that there is a representation of the Crucifixion near the sick bed, so that the dying man may frequently gaze upon his Lord and commend himself to Him.

7. He should cause to be removed from the sick room any dangerous object, as unsuitable pictures, and especially any person likely to be an occasion of sin to him. At the close, only such people should be present, as are absolutely necessary to assist; and the priest should keep away any one who might excite any passion in the dying man, even though it be a near relation.

Remedies
against
tempta-
tion.

CCCLXXVII. The general remedy against temptation is the frequent invocation of the holy Name of Jesus, and the sign of the Cross. In temptations of faith, the most terrible of all, and which usually try men who have led dissolute lives, especially those who have been wise in their own conceit; it is better to advise the sufferer not to reason, but merely to answer, "I believe all that the Holy Church believes, inasmuch as she believes the truth;" to thank God that he was born in the bosom of the Church, and to protest that he wills to live and die in the Faith. The best means of driving away such temptations, is to occupy the mind with other thoughts; making acts of contrition, confidence, love of God, &c. Bellarmine tells us of a certain theologian who, on the point of death, venturing to dispute with the devil concerning an article of faith, was led into error by the enemy, and lost. If however these temptations continue, the priest should tell the sick man that the proofs of our Faith, so righteous and so holy, propagated by poor fishermen

in the midst of so many persecutions, confirmed by so many miracles, and attested by so many thousands of martyrs, who died to defend it, are so sure, that they make the Truth evident, although they do not make evident the things which they teach; for if its mysteries were evident to us, where would be the merit of faith? For it would have no merit, unless it were obscure. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

CCCLXXVIII. *Despair* is the temptation by which the devil most often attacks the dying. Accordingly it is rarely expedient to speak to them of the justice of God, of the sufferings of the lost, or of the enormity of their own faults. Rather turn the sick man's mind to confidence in God's mercy, to the Passion of the Saviour, and to the Divine promises. The first ground of our hope, is the Divine Mercy; for God calls Himself "the Father of Mercies" and declares that He is "found of them that sought Him not." He desires our salvation more than we desire it ourselves. He mourns to see Himself abandoned by those whom He would press to His heart, as says S. Bernard ^v, "He seeks to enfold those, by whom He complains that He is forsaken." He is always ready to forgive, and to "abundantly pardon;" He protests that He "wills not the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted and live;" He says that, when a sinner repents, He forgets all his faults. "If the wicked man will turn from all his sins, all his transgressions that he hath committed shall not be mentioned unto him."

Against the temptation to despair.

[†] S. John xx. 29. ^u 2 Cor. i. 3. ^v Is. lxxv. 1.

^w Amplecti quærit a quibus desertum esse se queritur.

^x Isa. lv. 7. ^y Ez. xxxiii. 11. ^z Ib. xviii. 22.

Who can mistrust the Divine Mercy, after such gracious promises? One act of contrition will obtain pardon for a countless number of sins. The publican was justified by saying, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." The prodigal son was no sooner at his Father's feet, than he was clasped to that Father's heart. David no sooner cried, "I have sinned," than Nathan answered, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin."

The second ground of our hope, is the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. He tells us that *the* object of His coming on earth was "to save sinners." I came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He promises to reject no one, who casts himself at His feet, "Whoso cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." He tells us^d how carefully He seeks His lost sheep, and how, when He finds one, He rejoices over it, embraces it, and carries it home upon His shoulders. He seems to love it with peculiar tenderness, as He has shewn in S. Mary of Egypt, the blessed Angela of Foligno, S. Margaret of Cortona, and so many other sinful souls. So then, no one who has a good will, need fear to be condemned by that good Master Who condemned Himself to die upon the Cross, in order not to condemn us.

CCCLXXIX. The third ground of hope, lies in the promises of God, Who again and again promises grace to whosoever seeks it. "Ask and ye shall have." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you." This promise is made to all, righteous or sinners.

^a 2 Sam. xii. 13. ^b S. Matt. ix. 13. ^c S. John vi. 37.

^d S. Matt. xviii. 12. ^e S. John xvi. 24. ^f Ib. 23.

“^s Every one that asketh receiveth.” It suffices, then, to ask of God the grace to be saved, and He will give it. “^h The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh Him.”

CCCLXXX. Sometimes the temptation is to pride and vainglory. This, says S. Bernard, is an arrow which “lightly penetrates, but does not lightly wound,” especially in the case of a good person. If then the priest sees that his penitent is too certain of his salvation, on account of his good works, he will tell him, that we have nothing really our own, save our sins, and that all good comes from God, “ⁱ what hast thou which thou hast not received?” that no one is infallibly certain of being accepted of God; “^k No man knows whether he be worthy of love or hatred;” and that every man must work out his “salvation with fear and trembling^l”.

Temptation to vainglory.

If the temptation be to impatience of suffering, remind the sufferer of what the martyrs bore. One has been scorched alive, another cut in pieces, another, burned over a slow fire. Above all, set before him, how the Innocent Jesus suffered more than all together, for love of us. Remind him that the pains of sickness are inevitable, and that his impatiences will but increase them here, and possibly involve greater sufferings hereafter. On the contrary, if he accepts them for the sake of God, his patience will lighten them in this world, shorten the need of purification in the world to come, and increase his reward in Heaven. “^m Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”

Temptation to impatience.

^s S. Matt. vii. 8.

^h Lam. iii. 25.

ⁱ 1 Cor. iv. 7.

^k Eccl. ix. 1.

^l Phil. ii. 12.

^m S. John xvi. 20.

The pains of the last sickness perfect our eternal crown; for, according, to S. Bonaventura, to suffer with patience is the most perfect of all works. “^a Let patience have her perfect work.” It is thus that God deals with His chosen ones, inasmuch as the cross is the certain pledge of salvation. S. Clara was subject to the most intense sufferings during twenty-eight years; as also S. Ludwine during thirty-eight years. “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” “^p The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” In this way the sick man must be led to resign himself entirely to the will of God, not merely as concerns his sufferings, but with respect to mistakes made by his physicians, or neglect on the part of those who are nursing him. Counsel him, above all, to ask of God the holy virtue of patience.

CCCLXXXI. Recall to young people who think it very hard to die, the sorrows of this life, its trials and sufferings; above all, the danger of sin and perdition. This thought it is, which has made so many saints desire death. “I may lose God every moment that I live,” said S. Theresa. Each time the clock struck, she rejoiced that another hour of danger was past. The holy martyrs met death joyfully, being filled with the double desire to be free from all danger of sin, and to possess God. “^q Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord . . . they rest from their labours.” This life is but a passage; “^r We

^a S. Jas. i. 4.^o 2 Cor. iv. 17.^p Rom. viii. 18.^q Rev. xiv. 13.^r Heb. xiii. 14.

have here no abiding city:" All must die. Teach the sick man to thank God for not having cut him off in a state of sin, but, on the contrary, calling him to Himself fortified by the Sacraments, and with good hope of salvation. During life we are continually displeasing God, if only by slight faults, and we may gladly accept and even desire death which sets us free from all such. Moreover, we must resign ourselves to God, Who makes all things work together for our good. Ask him, how he can be sure, that in a longer life he might not lose God? If he says that he would fain live a little longer, "in order to repent of my sins and do something for God, for hitherto I have done nothing:" tell him that there is no worthier penitence than willingly to accept death as an expiation for sin, and no act more perfect and more pleasing to God than resigning ourselves to death because it is His will.

CCCLXXXII. Against the temptation of *attachment to worldly goods or relations*. If the sick man shrinks from dying on account of his attachment to earthly possessions, tell him that such goods are not real goods, but as the shifting show of a stage, which speedily pass away, or give us more sorrow than satisfaction. The real treasures, which fully satisfy us and can never pass away, are those which God has laid up for us in Heaven. If the sick man mourns to leave his wife or children, or others dear to him, say to him: 'My brother, we must all die: save your soul, and in heaven you will pray for them, and one day you will rejoice together for all eternity. What more happy than to go to dwell with God, with our Saviour, and with all the saints of Para-

Temptation of attachment to worldly goods or ties.

dise?' If he fears poverty for them when he is gone, say to him, 'If you save your soul, as I hope, you will be of more use to them there, than here below. Fear nothing; God Who takes care of the sparrows will not forsake them. Though you love them, God loves them far more.'

Tempta-
tion to
hatred.

CCCLXXXIII. Against the temptation to *hatred* or *revenge*. Remind those tempted to hatred on account of some offence received, of the Saviour's precept, "love your enemies;" and of the solemn words, "'If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'" God promises forgiveness to him who forgives. "'Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.'" If their enemies have done them wrongs and injuries, how much greater are the wrongs they themselves have done towards God! If then they wish that God should forgive them, how much more should they forgive their neighbours! "As the Lord forgave you, so also do ye." Lastly remind them, how acceptable a forgiving spirit is in God's sight. S. John Gualbert, as he forgave one who killed his brother, beheld Jesus Crucified bowing His Head in token of acknowledgement. S. Stephen prayed for those who stoned him; S. James, just before his death, embraced his accuser; S. Louis of France did the like to one who had plotted against his life; S. Ambrose supported for a long period a traitor who had attempted his life; and above all examples of forgiveness, is that of the Saviour upon the Cross, praying for His murderers.

Affections
to be sug-
gested to
the sick.

CCCLXXXIV. To the motives of confidence al-

* S. Matt. vi. 15.

† S. Luke vi. 37.

‡ Col. iii. 13.

ready mentioned, you can add these passages of Holy Scripture. “^v Did ever any trust in Him and was confounded?” “No one has ever hoped in God, and been forsaken by Him.” “He is the Propitiation for our sins.” Jesus Christ has died to obtain pardon for us. “^v He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?” How then should God, Who has given us His own Son, refuse us pardon? Put words of trust into the sick man’s mouth, “^x The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom then shall I fear? Into Thy Hands I commend my spirit; for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of Truth. In Thee, O Lord, have I trusted; let me never be confounded.” “We beseech Thee, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood. In Thee, Lord, have I trusted, let me never be confounded. O good Jesu, hide me in Thy Wounds.” “Thy Wounds are my merits.” “Thou, Lord, Who hast given Thy Life and Thy Blood for me; Thou wilt not refuse me pardon. O Passion of Jesus, thou art my hope! Merits of Jesus, ye are my hope! Wounds of Christ, ye are my hope! Blood of Christ, thou art my hope! Death of Christ, thou art my hope!” “I will sing for ever of the lovingkindness of the Lord.”

CCCLXXXV. *Of contrition.* S. Augustine says, that no one should cease lamenting his sins to his latest breath. “Enter not into judgement with Thy servant.” “My Jesus and my Judge, pardon me, ere Thou judge me;” “A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” “Would, O my

^v Ecclus. ii. 10.

^v Rom. viii. 32.

^x Ps. xxvii. 1.

God, that I had never offended Thee ! Thou didst not deserve that I should so treat Thee ; I grieve with my whole heart, that I ever displeased Thee. Goodness Infinite, I grieve above all else, that I have grieved Thee." "Father, I am not worthy to be called Thy son." "I have forsaken Thee ; I have despised Thy grace ; I have lost Thee wilfully ; forgive me, for the Love and for the Blood of Thy dear Son. I repent, with my whole heart. I hate, detest, abhor the sins, by which I lost Thee. My God, what ill didst Thou ever do me, that I have so offended Thee ? For the love of Jesus, have mercy upon me." "O my God, henceforth, whether I have long or little time to live, I will to love Thee. In expiation of my sins, I offer Thee my death and the sufferings I shall have to bear till my death. Lord, Thou mightest justly condemn me, who have so much offended Thee ; I beseech Thee, chasten me here, and spare me for ever."

Acts of
love.

CCCLXXXVI. "My God, I love Thee above all things, more than myself, with my whole heart ; for Thou art Infinite Goodness, worthy of an infinite love. I am all unworthy to love Thee, O my God, since I have so offended Thee ; but, for the love of Jesus, fill Thou my heart with Thy love. Would, that all men loved Thee ! I rejoice that Thou art infinitely happy. My Jesus, I would suffer and die for Thee, Who hast suffered so much, and hast died for me. Do with me as Thou wilt, but take not from me the bliss of loving Thee. My God, save me ; to love Thee is my salvation. My God, I long for Paradise, that I may love Thee eternally with all my strength. My God, cast me not into hell, though I deserve it ;

there, I should hate Thee, but I will not to hate Thee. What evil hast Thou done me, Lord, for which I should hate Thee? Make me love Thee, and send me where Thou pleasest. I will to suffer as much as Thou pleasest; I would die to please Thee. My Jesus, bind me fast to Thee; let me never be separated from Thee. O my God, make me wholly Thine, before I die. When shall I be able to say, 'My God, I can never lose Thee more?' My God, would that I could love Thee, as Thou oughtest to be loved."

CCCLXXXVII. *Of resignation.* Our whole happiness, the one object of all our life, our perfection, is to be conformed to the Will of God. "In His pleasure is life." He wills for us all that is best for us. When the Saviour offered S. Gertrude life or death, she answered, "Lord, I will, that which Thou wiltest." In like manner when He offered to S. Catherine of Sienna her choice, between a crown of roses and another of thorns, she made answer, "I choose that which Thou wiltest for me."

Acts of
resigna-
tion.

Then ask the sick man, "And now if God calls you to Himself, are you not willing?" "Yes, my father." Then say, "Behold me, Lord; do with me, as it seemeth good to Thee; Thy Will be done; I will all that Thou wiltest; I desire to suffer as much as Thou wiltest, and to die when Thou wiltest. I give myself into Thy Hands, body and soul, for life or death. I will bless the Lord always. Whether Thou comfort me or afflict me, O my God, I love Thee and will always to love Thee." "Eternal Father, I unite my death with the Death of my Saviour, and, thus united, I offer it to Thee. O Will

Affections.

of my God, I love thee! O good pleasure of my God, I offer myself wholly to thee!"

Desire of
Paradise.

CCCLXXXVIII. *Of desire of Paradise.* Blossius relates several revelations, which shew that some departed souls suffer what is called the *pain of desire* or *languishing*, because of their lukewarmness in desiring Paradise. This life is a prison-house, where we cannot see God. Hence David cries, "Bring my soul out of prison;" and S. Augustine, "O Lord, may I die that I may see Thee." S. Jerome used to call death his sister, saying, "Open to me, my sister;" and truly; for it is death which opens the gate of Paradise to us. For this reason S. Charles Borromeo, seeing a picture, wherein Death was represented with a scythe in his hand, bade the painter efface the scythe and replace it with a golden key, as being the key of Heaven. Often, then, remind the sick of the bliss of paradise, recalling to them those words of S. Paul, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." "When shall I come to appear before the Presence of God? When shall I see Thee, my God? Beauty Infinite, when shall I love Thee? I shall love Thee always in Paradise, and Thou wilt always love me; so shall we love each other eternally, O my God, my Love, my All! My Jesus, when shall I kiss the Wounds Thou receivedst for me!"

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on kissing
the
Crucifix.

CCCLXXXIX. "My Jesus, look not on my sins, but on that which Thou hast suffered for me. Remember that I am one of Thy sheep, for which Thou didst die. I accept death for Thy sake, Who didst vouchsafe to die for me. Thou hast given

Thyself wholly to me; I give myself wholly to Thee. Lord, Thou hast suffered more than I suffer; Thou art innocent, and I a sinner! I kiss those Feet, so wearied in seeking me, in saving me. My most loving Redeemer, I embrace Thy sacred Feet with Magdalene; say to me, that Thou hast forgiven me. Oh my God, for the love of Jesus, forgive me and grant me the grace of a holy death. Eternal Father, Thou hast given me Thy Son; I give myself to Thee. My Jesus, I have repaid Thee with ingratitude, have pity on me! I have so often deserved hell, punish me here, and not in eternity. Thou didst not forsake me, when I fled from Thee; forsake me not, now that I seek Thee. O most sweet Jesus, suffer me not to be separated from Thee. Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? O Lord Jesus Christ, by that bitter pang, which Thy most glorious Soul suffered, when it went forth from Thy blessed Body, have pity on my sinful soul, when it goeth forth from my body. My Jesus, Thou hast died for love of me; I will to die, for love of Thee. Amen."

CCCXC. "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit: I will sleep in peace, and rest." "How happy, if I lose all to possess Thee, my sovereign Good! Into Thy hands I commend my spirit, Cast me not away from Thy Presence. Most sweet Jesus, suffer me not to be separated from Thee." With S. Francis, "For love of Thy love, may I die, Who for love of my love didst vouchsafe to die." "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." "In Thee, O Lord, have I trusted, let me never be confounded. May I love Thee, O Lord, my Strength! O may I die, O Lord, that I may see Thee! What

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to be sug-
gested to
Priests
and Re-
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when
dying.

have I in heaven? What do I desire on earth, in comparison with Thee? Thou art the God of my heart, and God my portion for ever. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Father, I have sinned; I am not worthy to be called Thy son. Turn Thy face from my sins. I am Thine, O save me! Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? Give me but the love of Thee, and Thy grace, and I shall be satisfied therewith. My Beloved is mine, and I am His." "I will sing for ever of the loving-kindness of the Lord."

CCCXCI. It is allowable to give absolution to a dying person who is unconscious, "sub conditione," which seems always the safest, if any one bears witness that he had shewn any token of repentance or desire for Confession, even if he had become unconscious while in the act of sin. In truth on the one hand, the "condition" prevents irreverence to the Sacrament; on the other, it is right to suppose that in such case every man desires anything which may tend to his salvation, and that he would give some sign of that desire, if he were capable of so doing.

Of last
Communion.

CCCXCII. 1) To receive the last Communion, it is not necessary to wait, till all hope is past; it is enough, if there be peril of death. 2) When there is apparent danger of vomiting, it is not to be given; though trial may be made with unconsecrated bread. 3) The last Communion may be given to children, who have the use of reason; and to delirious people, if they have been good livers, or have recently been to Confession; always provided, that there is no risk of exposing the Sacrament to any irreverence. 4) To the sick It may and ought to be given, even on Good

Friday. 5) It is a generally received opinion, that the Viaticum may be repeatedly given to a sick person without his fasting; at least as frequently as once a week; and many think it should be oftener. If the sick person had received the Blessed Sacrament in the morning, as an act of devotion, he cannot receive It again as the Viaticum that same day, unless death is imminent in consequence of any violence, such as a wound, a fall, poison &c. 6) If the sick person has only received the Sacrament of penance, and his illness is still serious, the priest should prepare him to receive the Viaticum as soon as may be, while his head is clear, and he is most able to profit by it. To this end the priest must move him to desire it, as a protection against the assaults of the devil, by uniting him with his Saviour. He will tell him, "Jesus Christ wills to come to thee, to bring thee the riches of His grace; He will either take thee to Paradise, if the time be come, or restore thee to health, if that be desirable for thee." S. Cyril of Alexandria says that the Holy Eucharist "dispels diseases, and heals the sick:" and S. Gregory of Nazianzus relates, how his father was cured at once by receiving It.

CCCXCIII. The priest should say to the sick man, "My brother, your illness is dangerous, though not hopeless; you would do well to receive the Holy Communion as soon as possible; your Saviour will restore you to health, if it be good for your salvation; and if you are to die, He will strengthen you against temptations, and conduct you into Paradise. What say you? Do you desire to receive It? Yes. Well then, prepare to throw yourself into the Arms

of your Redeemer, Who died for you. Say to Him lovingly; Come, my Jesus, come; my Love, my only Good, come to my longing soul! 'Whom have I in Heaven, and what do I desire on earth but Thee? Thou art the God of my heart, and God, my Portion for ever.' "

When the preparation is made for Holy Communion, the priest may remind the sick person of S. Philip Neri's exclamation, when he beheld the Blessed Sacrament brought in his room, "Behold my Love." You may say likewise, "my brother, this is the Son of God, Who, for love of you, came down from heaven to earth; Who willed to die for you, and now He is coming to visit you. Be of good cheer, He has forgiven you everything. You grieve for your offences against Him, and you would grieve yet more: you love Him with your whole heart, is it not so? Then say to Him, 'My Jesus, I love Thee; and for love of Thee, I grieve with my whole heart, that I have displeased Thee: I accept of death for love of Thee: behold, I am ready. I even desire to die, if it be Thy holy Will, that I may go to love Thee eternally in heaven.' "

To this the priest will add: "Now then, N., since you love Jesus, you forgive for love of Him all who have offended you, is it not so? and at the same time you ask pardon of your offences against others? Turn then to your Saviour, Who is about to give Himself to you; say to Him that you are not worthy of Him: 'Lord, I am not worthy.' Nevertheless He wills to come to you. Call Him then, 'Come, my Saviour, my Love, my All; I desire nought but Thee.' "

After his Communion, it will be well to help the sick man to make his thanksgiving. "Now, my brother, thank your Saviour Who, of His boundless goodness, has given Himself to you. The Holy Sacrament is called the earnest of Paradise, 'the pledge of future glory.' Be of good cheer: God wills to give you the kingdom of heaven, and, as the earnest thereof, He has just given you Himself. Say then with me, My Lord, my Love, I cast myself into Thy arms; I thank Thee, I love Thee, and I hope to love Thee eternally: I grieve for having displeased Thee, and I desire to consecrate this remnant of my life, be it long or short, to Thy love. My Saviour, I offer Thee my life, if it please Thee to take it: may Thy will be always done: only give me Thy love and holy perseverance, so that my hope may be in loving Thee, and I may abide in Thy love eternally in Heaven; Thou wilt not forsake me; I will never forsake Thee any more; so shall we love each other eternally, O God of my soul!"

CCCXCVI. When the last agony begins, the priest should make use of all the Church's means to help her dying child. He should often sign him with the Cross, and give the Benediction, "God the Father, Who created thee, bless thee; God, the Son, Who redeemed thee, bless thee; God the Holy Ghost, Who sanctified thee, bless thee." He will give him [when it will comfort him] the Crucifix to kiss. From time to time he will suggest some act of contrition, resignation, offering of his sufferings, confidence in the Passion of Christ; always with pauses, so that the patient be not over-tired. He should make him invoke frequently in heart, if he cannot speak, the holy Name of Jesus. The assistants

Advice for
the last
agony and
for death.

should at intervals say Litanies for him, and it is well that the passing-bell be rung, so that all who hear may pray for his happy departure; a custom which is most edifying to those also who are in health. Bear in mind, as a general rule, that when once the sick man becomes unconscious, it is better to assist him with prayers than by speaking. As the last breath draws near, the Priest, kneeling by the bed, should solemnly say the Commendatory Prayer. If the dying man retains consciousness, it is well to give him absolution several times, after a brief act of reconciliation, so as to remedy any imperfection in his past confessions, or at least to enlarge his grace. If unhappily he fall into mortal sin, do not frighten him, but comfort him, and exhort him to call on Jesus. If he be tempted anew, suggest an act of contrition and absolve him at once. If the patient is unconscious, and gives no sign of repentance nor of wish for absolution, it must not be thus often repeated. The Confessor must be very much guided by his knowledge of the dying man's conscience, and act accordingly; repeating the absolution more frequently, if he has been subject to bad thoughts, or dies from wounds received, or with a strong passion of hatred or wrong affection, or if the disease be very severe, or the sick man lack patience. It is well also to tell him, if he be unable to speak, to lift his hand, or make some other sign when he wishes for Absolution. When all seems to be over, the Priest should not be too hasty in assuming that it is so, as he may be mistaken; but when it is quite certain, he should call upon those who are present to commend the departed soul to God.

Affections
to be sug-
gested to
the dying.

CCCXCVII. The most suitable acts to be sug-

gested to dying persons are those of faith, love and repentance. My God ! infallible Truth, I believe in Thee ; boundless Mercy, I hope in Thee ; Infinite Goodness, I love Thee. In Thee, O Lord, have I trusted, let me never be confounded. Whom have I in Heaven, what do I desire upon earth, but Thee ? Thou art the God of my heart, and God, my Portion for ever. May I die for love of Thy love, Who didst vouchsafe to die for love of me. My God, let me not lose Thee ; I desire Thee alone. Infinite Goodness, I do love Thee, I do love Thee, I do love Thee. My Jesus, forgive me, Who in a few moments wilt judge me. I do love Thee, and because I love Thee, I repent that ever I displeased Thee. "O my most sweet Jesus, suffer me not to be separated from Thee. Blood of Christ, wash me ; Passion of Christ, save me." "Into Thy Hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." "O Lord, let me die that I may see Thee." "O sweet country, O land of love, when shall I see thee ? My God, when shall I love Thee in Heaven ? My Saviour, when shall I never more fear to lose Thee ?" "My God and my All." "O my God, I rejoice to part with all things, that I may possess Thee ! My God, for the love of Jesus, have mercy upon me. Keep me, Lord, from Thy presence, but deny me not the joy of loving Thee." "We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servant, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious Blood." "O most gracious God ! I desire and hope to love Thee eternally." "My love is crucified." "My God and my all." "My Jesus, my love, is dead for me." "O God, make speed to save me ; O Lord, make haste to help me." "Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus, give me Thy grace.

I love Thee, I repent." "O my God, how can I thank Thee for all the benefits which Thou hast bestowed upon me? I hope to go to heaven, to thank Thee everlastingly. I will sing for ever of the loving-kindness of the Lord."

CCCXCVIII. "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit; have mercy upon me, according to Thy great goodness." At the last breath pray, "My Jesus, I commend to Thee this soul, which Thou hast purchased with Thine own Blood." Bear in mind that, at the last moment, you should make these acts in a louder voice and without pause. "Lord, Jesus, receive my spirit. My God, help me; let me depart to love Thee through all eternity. My Jesus, my love, I love Thee and I repent. Would that I had never displeased Thee! My Jesus, save me by Thy Passion; I love Thee. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, I give Thee my heart and my soul."

CCCXCIX. It is desirable that the Priest should learn to know what are the signs of approaching death, in order that he may be useful to the sick man at the last hour. The principal and universal signs are, laboured breathing; an intermittent or failing pulse; and the eyes hollow and glassy. [A physician will suggest others.]

CCCC². Take S. Francis de Sales as a model of your conduct with the sick. "We went together to see a lady in my diocese," (it is the Bishop of Belley who writes,) "who was of a great age and in the last stage of illness, having already received our Lord; we found her perfectly calm and at rest as to her inner self, having put all in order. One

² Esprit de S. Fr. de Sales, P. ii. c. 3 and P. xviii. c. 26, 27.

thing only disturbed her, the perpetual anxiety of her children to give her some relief." The holy S. Francis, wishing to remove this care from her mind, said, "As for me, my dear mother, when I am ill I am never better pleased than to see my relations and my servants taking a great deal of trouble for me." We asked, why? and he replied, "Because I know that God will reward them abundantly for all they do for me; and that such sacrifices are very acceptable to Him. In truth, if those who minister to us, either in sickness or in health, do so only for our sakes, and not to please God, they are wasting their labour; but if they serve us for His sake, they are to be envied, rather than pitied."

S. Francis used to minister to the dying, like a good angel, soothing them with gentle heavenly words, uttering before them short ejaculatory prayers, putting them into their lips or hearts, according as they could bear it, and then letting them rest awhile; "Oh Jesus, I give myself to Thee; I give myself wholly to Thee. My God, I am Thine; save me for Thine own glory. O Father, I commit my body and soul, my whole being into Thy hands; my God, Thy Will be done; yes, Lord Jesus, Thy Will, not mine."

Between each aspiration he would pause, so that the dying man might dwell upon it. He could not bear the dying to be teased with lengthy exhortations. This is not the time for preaching, or even for long prayers; but rather for encouraging the departing soul in that submission to the will of God, which must be the occupation of his whole eternal life.

Not unfrequently S. Francis used to minister to

condemned criminals, attending them to execution, and he taught them to make a holy death in the same way. When he had heard them unburden their consciences, he would give them a little breathing time ; and then, at intervals, suggest, acts of faith, then of hope, then of love ; and afterwards of repentance and resignation to the will of God, and of trust in His mercy ; without adding to their afflictions, the wearisomeness inseparable from continued exhortation.

CCCCI. A person, who delighted in mental prayer, without which she seemed to pine and languish, complained to S. Francis, in a severe illness, that she could not use mental prayer. He answered, "Do not be troubled, because you have to lie in bed, unable to meditate ; for to bear the Saviour's rod, is not less good than to meditate ; since it is better to hang on the Cross with our Saviour, than merely to gaze upon Him there. But I know that a thousand times during the day you cast your heart into God's hands, and that is enough. Obey your doctors absolutely ; and if they forbid any practice, whether it be fasting, mental prayer, even the Office, or anything save ejaculatory prayer, I entreat you earnestly, as you love and respect me, to be perfectly obedient, and so doing you will please God. As soon as you get well and strong, you shall begin again, and you shall see that we shall get on well then, by God's help."

S. Francis held the sick in special respect as members of our suffering Lord. He wrote to a sick person in the following words, "When I think of you lying there upon your bed, I pay you the spe-

ciallest reverence and an extraordinary honour, as to a creature visited of God, clothed with His robes, His very spouse. When the Saviour hung upon the Cross, His very enemies declared that He was a King; and those souls which are on the cross are declared to be queens. Do you know what the Angels envy us? It is that we can suffer for our Lord, which they never have. S. Paul, who had been caught up into Heaven and had been amid the delights of Paradise, rejoiced only in his infirmities, and in the Cross of Christ."

Commending an important matter to the person he is writing to, S. Francis continues, "I entreat you to commend a good work, which I have much at heart, to God, especially while you are suffering; for at such a time your prayers, though short and in the heart, will be most effectual; and at the same time, ask those virtues which are most necessary to your own soul."

ARTICLE IX.

Of Penances and Absolution.

CCCCII^a. With respect to the penances which you must impose as a judge, they must be modified as to quality and quantity by your skill as a physician; not considering the illness alone, but the strength or weakness of the patient's constitution. A good physician does not give the same remedies to a weak

Of discretion in the imposition of penances.

^a Prêtre Sanctifié n. 31-34.

A a

person, even in a great fever, as to one who is strong. In complicated maladies, he adjusts his treatment carefully, so as not to aggravate one while curing another. A physician who neglects to heed these varying circumstances, might do more harm than good. The wise doctor prefers to administer cautiously and by degrees, such powerful treatment as the weak patient cannot bear all at once; preparing him and strengthening him, till he can use stronger remedies with benefit.

So also it would be very unwise to lay heavy penances upon a newly converted sinner, whose sorrow for sin is but ordinary though sufficient; in so doing you would run the risk of driving him from devotion. Your object should be not only to punish his past sins, but to win him to the Sacraments and to piety, so that, through your gentleness and moderation, he may be induced to return frequently and so obtain fresh spiritual strength. Then you may be sure that he will be the first to accept or even to ask for severer penances. By such a course you will secure God's glory more effectually than by premature stringency. Such moderation is not laxity, but rather a wise combination of the judge's and physician's skill. S. Thomas says, "^b As a small fire is put out, if much fuel is heaped upon it, so it may happen, that a slight feeling of contrition in the penitent may give way under the weight of penance. It is better that the priest should tell the penitent what penance ought to be enjoined, and yet only enjoin what the penitent may cheerfully bear." S. Chrysostom teaches us what is the

^b Quodlib. 3. and 28.

consequence of undue severity ;—"I could recount many, who were brought to the extremest ills, because a penance was required of them equal to their sins. For a penance is not to be hastily adapted to the measure of the sins, but the mind of the sinner has to be ascertained ; lest, while you would mend the rent, you make a worse ; while you would amend the fallen, you occasion a greater fall. For those who are weak and remiss and entangled with the pleasures of the world, and who from their birth or power may be highminded, may be gradually withdrawn from the practice of sin, and may be freed, if not altogether yet in part, from the ills with which they are held ; whereas if you rebuke them with severity at first, you will deprive them of that lesser amendment. For the soul put suddenly to shame, sinks into impassiveness, and then neither obeys gentle words, nor is moved by threats, nor is touched by benefits."

If then, you confess a penitent who is seriously ill, although his many sins may deserve a long and heavy penance, yet have regard to his condition, and do not overwhelm him by imposing the penance he deserves. Be satisfied with giving him some brief prayer to say, and bidding him offer his illness resignedly to God ; telling him that if he recovers, he is to come to you, and then you will give him some further penance in acquittal of his debt to God ; or if he be unable to do so, he must confess frequently, do good works, and bear his trials patiently, in expiation of his faults. But if you prescribe penances of months and years, you may, as has happened, diminish his confidence in you so

What kind
of pe-
nances.

much, that perhaps if he were to remember some grave hitherto forgotten sin, he would be afraid to turn to you for absolution, and so might be in peril of dying a bad death. The actual and very grave peril outweighs your fear, that he may not come to you when recovered.

CCCCIII. Be equally cautious as to the nature of the penances you impose. Never impose as obligations, difficult things which may be left undone; but suggest such by way of counsel. For instance, you may counsel children to beg pardon of their parents for disobedience, but do not order them to do so; do not forbid a drunkard to drink anything at all on a certain day, but fix a discreet limit beyond which he may not go. Various other penances may be given, subject to certain conditions, rather than absolutely; such as giving alms, coming on a certain day to confession, saying certain prayers, in the event of the penitent's being guilty of a particular fault within a certain time.

Still less ought you to inflict penances which expose your penitent's faults to others: e.g. you may impose a day of fasting upon the head of a household, who is independent of others, but not upon his child, whose parents might easily guess the cause. When you give easy penances, such as saying five *Our Fathers*, you may prescribe them daily for some time. But it is not well to do so with less easy penances. In these cases it is better to leave a certain amount of liberty, lest the penitent be embarrassed, and perhaps incur guilt by omitting what he is bound to do. If you impose several different things, keep to the same number in each, to avoid confu-

sion; e.g. five fasts, five litanies &c. When you are doubtful if you ought to impose a more severe penance, bid your penitent specially offer all the good he is able to do throughout the week, to God; thus sanctifying what he does, without overburdening him. S. Thomas de Villeneuve says, "So temper the rigour of penance, that neither its lightness should lessen the sense of the gravity of the sin, nor the severity risk its omission. This you will secure, if you enjoin an easy one, and counsel the sinner a sharper one; yet so that the efficacy of the Sacrament should apply to all his voluntary and spontaneous penance."

Of
protective
penances.

CCCCIV. You should take especial care that, while a penance is borne as satisfaction to God, it be also profitable as to the penitent's future preservation from sin. Thus you should always give the preference (especially when dealing with delicate people,) to such as encourage holy thoughts and affections, rather than to bodily penances. Many a soul has made great progress in sanctification through meditations, spiritual readings, and devotions, especially to the Passion of our Lord, practised as penances. Clericato mentions having seen several sinners who were gifted with unusual contrition in their last hours; and when he investigated what had won so great a grace for such sinful men, he found that they had taken great pains to be present at Holy Communion and been very devout thereat. Thus this Expiatory Sacrifice worked its result, and though late, the Divine Blood demanded their salvation, and obtained it.

The most
useful
kind of
penance.

° Conc. Fer. 6. post 4 dom. Quadrag.

CCCCV. No penance is more useful than frequenting the Sacraments. It is certain that among those who have the power of frequenting them, and have not done it, very few have been able to keep in the right way by means of all other aids. On the other hand, you will generally find that those who do come constantly to the Sacraments, whatever their bad habits, rarely grow worse, gradually gain the victory over their sins, and end by entire amendment; and that, because the Sacraments are the most powerful means of grace set before men. But they are useless to such as do not receive them with fitting dispositions. Consequently do you leave nothing undone to inspire men with reverence and love for them, that so they may with all possible diligence prepare for them.

Above all, employ your utmost skill and charity in dealing with backsliders, who both urgently need to come to confession, and at the same time have great difficulty in so doing. Tell them that should they relapse it will be a great consolation to you, if they would come to confess at once, not, in regard to the evil, but for the Christian humility and good will which they would shew by having recourse at once to the remedy. Tell them that it matters not that they are not prepared for confession; let them anyhow come and say that the fever has returned. Such speedy humility weakens the devil's power not a little; encourages the penitent, and God gives him fresh grace. By persevering in such a course, his own humility, and your salutary counsels will, by the blessing of God, soon gain the victory over his own temptations.

But if he delays his humiliation and confession,

he runs a great risk of falling rapidly and of losing all desire and energy in self-correction. Your manner of receiving such persons should encourage them; never seeming astonished at their relapses, never treating them with any contempt, never sending them back with harshness. Any one of these faults might discourage them altogether from ever coming to you again. Yet, as a general rule, it is desirable for all penitents, and especially for backsliders, to go habitually to the same Confessor. When they come to you, always shew that you are glad to see them, always sympathise with them, and, above all, always help them. Enquire, whence their relapse proceeds, so as to remove the occasion; apply fresh remedies, and, before you absolve them, take the precautions spoken of in no. 340 &c.

The Confessor must impose a penance.

CCCCVI^d. In the matter of penances, the Confessor ought to impose penance when he gives absolution. It is generally best to do this before absolution, so as to see how the penitent takes it, but it may be sometimes imposed afterwards; for it remains still morally connected with the absolution. If, immediately after the absolution, the penitent confesses a fresh sin, it is better to give him a new, if only a slight penance. The penance should always be imposed under some obligation; but it has been asked whether the Confessor can give a "grave" penance "sub obligatione levi?" The general opinion is in the affirmative, because, in the Sacrament of penance, the priest is not merely the minister of Christ as in all other Sacraments, but a real judge appointed by the Saviour with power to bind and

^d S. Liguori n. 11—14.

loose, so that the amount of obligation rests solely with the Confessor.

Penance should be proportioned to the faults committed, but consider well the counsel; "The priests of the Lord ought to enjoin salutary and suitable amends, as the Holy Spirit and prudence may suggest, considering the gravity of the crimes, and the ability of the penitent; lest if they wink at their sins, and deal too easily with penitents, enjoining some very slight acts for most grave offences, they become partakers of other men's sins." There are various reasons which make it expedient to lessen a penance; as, if the penitent be very contrite, or if, before he comes, he has done many works of repentance. If the penitent needs a medicinal penance, he must always give one. Again, if the penitent be ill, or if he be dying or unconscious, he may be absolved without any penance. It is always well however, where it is possible, to impose some slight penance—such as kissing the Crucifix, invoking the holy Name of Jesus, at least in the heart, &c. It is not well to give sick people the penance of bearing their illness patiently, which is liable to plunge them into a multitude of scruples and uneasiness. The Salamanca doctors say, with reason, that if the sick man is able to make satisfaction by almsgiving, his Confessor should enjoin this, as every man is bound to do such penance as he can.

CCCCVII. Again, if the penitent's devotion be weak, and there is reason to doubt his performing a proportionate penance, let it be diminished accordingly. S. Charles and S. Thomas advise this, as do many others. It is true that the penance

should be proportioned to the fault, yet penances should be “*pro pœnitentium facultate, salutare et convenientes.*” *Salutares*, that is, profitable for the penitent’s salvation; *convenientes*, that is, suitable to the strength of the penitent, as well as to his sin. Now a penance which the weak penitent is not prepared to accept on account of his little piety, is neither profitable nor suitable; and is likely to do more harm than good. Amendment is much more the aim of this Sacrament than satisfaction.

In giving a penance the Confessor ought to consider the penitent’s dispositions; and S. Thomas says: “^e As the physician does not give so powerful medicine, lest, from the weakness of the frame, it occasion a greater peril, so the priest, moved by a divine instinct, does not alway enjoin the whole punishment, due to one sin, lest the sick should despair and give up penitence altogether.” And again: “It is more right to give a penance less than is due, than one greater; for, with God, we are more readily excused for great mercy than for over-great severity.” Gerson, Gaetan, and still more S. Antonine, say that the penance should be such as the penitent accepts willingly, and such as we believe he will be likely to perform. S. Antonine concludes by saying, that if the penitent declares himself too weak to fulfil a penance which is suitable, “then, however great his sins, he must not be sent away without absolution, lest he despair.” In such a case, he says, it will suffice to impose “all the good he can do.” These good works, enjoined in the administration of the Sacrament, will, as S. Thomas says, by virtue of the

• Opusc. 55. a. 4.

Sacrament itself, have a greater efficacy for the expiation of sin. The hope of making the Sacrament more acceptable to a penitent is a further reason for diminishing the penance imposed. But it is well to follow S. Thomas's counsel, and while only imposing the lighter penance, to advise the penitent voluntarily to undertake a heavier one. S. Fr. de Sales intimates that it is expedient to ask the penitent if he has courage to undertake the proposed penance. If he has not, it must be changed. S. Charles, Borromeo says: "In fine, let him impose a penance such as he judges may be performed by the penitent: accordingly let him sometimes, if it seems advisable, ask him whether he can, or whether he doubt that he can, perform the penance enjoined him, else he will change or lessen it."

CCCCVIII. It is very unwise to lay a penance upon a penitent disproportioned to his strength. Some Confessors give an over-hasty absolution to backsliders, ill-prepared or in proximate occasion of sin, and then think to cure them by heavy penances, which they are certain not to fulfil. Such will order a man who scarcely makes his Easter confession, to confess every week for a year; and impose fasts disciplines and meditations on another, when he hardly knows what they mean. The consequence is, that such penitents accept the penance as matter of necessity in order to obtain absolution; but they do not fulfil it, and feel themselves sinning anew by neglecting it; they even, especially the uninstructed, look upon their confession as invalid because they have not performed it. Under this misconception they fall back into their former disorders, and fright-

ened at the difficulty of fulfilling their obligations, they end by shrinking from confession and go groveling on in sin. Such, in numberless instances, is the effect of penances called proportionate, but which should rather be called supremely disproportionate. For the rest, except in the case of grave sickness, or of an extraordinary contrition, the Confessor would not do well to impose a penance for mortal sins, light in itself, and which only obliges *sub levi*. Doubtless, if it seem expedient, he may impose a good work which is light relatively to the sin, but then it should always be grave in itself and *sub gravi*.

Other advice concerning penances.

Imprudence of some confessors.

CCCCIX. It is not well to impose perpetual or very difficult penances, such as going into religion; still less to contract marriage, which ought to be entirely free nor make any perpetual vow. Even if the penitent wishes to make a vow; e. g. not to fall again, do not authorise it, except for a time, so as to see how he will keep it. You may profitably impose conditional penances, e. g. to give alms &c. after each fall. The penitent is bound to accept and fulfil such a penance. But it is not wise to give it him for long, because he may easily forget it and sins multiply. It is well only to give it for a short time; as for a month, or until his next confession^f. Bear in mind that a public penance must not be inflicted for secret faults; but it may be obligatory in the case of public faults, where nothing else can remedy scandal given, or restore an injured reputation. But you should not insist on public penance when the penitent resists it, if the scandal can be any other wise removed.

CCCCX. Remember that the works prescribed by

^f Lib. vi. n. 524.

The
penances
to be
given.

the Confessor should be *penal*; penance should not only be medicinal and protective to the new life, but also vindictive in expiation of past sin. These penal works are divided under the heads of fasting alms and prayer. Under fasting, we include every kind of bodily mortification: under prayer, confession and Communion, and all interior acts of charity, contrition, and of the Presence of God: and it is generally taught that all these acts may be given as penance.

Remember too, that theologians commonly teach, that prayer, almsgiving and all good actions are held as penal works, inasmuch as to us, the sons of Adam, with our fallen nature every good action "hath the character of penalty;" because since the loss of original righteousness we are all disposed to evil. S. Fr. de Sales says, "One man finds it hard to fast, another to visit the sick or prisoners, another to preach, hear confessions, and comfort the afflicted; another to pray, and so forth; but these last are more profitable than the first (i. e., fasting.) inasmuch as their fruit is more abundant and more to be desired."¹

Penances
must be
proportioned
to the particular
case.

CCCCXI. As a rule, works of mortification should be imposed for sins of the senses; almsgiving for sins of avarice; prayer for blasphemy &c; but always you should weigh what will be most suitable and profitable to the penitent. Frequenting the Sacraments, mental prayer and almsgiving are doubtless very useful penances; but practically they may be hurtful to a person who is unaccustomed to them. But it will be a useful penance to any one to make an act of contrition every night, at least for

¹ Intr. à la vie dévote, iii. 23.

some time; or to renew a good resolution every morning, saying with S. Philip Neri, "Lord, do Thou uphold me to-day, that I betray Thee not," or to say in going to bed, "I deserve now to be in hell fire;" or, "one day perhaps I shall die in this bed." To some, daily spiritual reading will be very useful. S. Fr. de Sales bids Confessors beware of over-burdening their penitents, for fear of discouraging them.

CCCCXII¹. In the exercise of his ministry the Confessor will make it his study to impose suitable penances. He will be careful not to give very light penances for very grave sins, since penance ought to bear some proportion both to the sin and to the sinner. For instance, an *Our Father* would be a very light penance for repeated adulteries or other impurities; or a *miserere*, for serious injury to a neighbour's property or reputation. Men would thus lose the hatred they ought to have for sin; they would regard it as a light thing, and would give themselves up to the gravest excesses. Therefore penances should not be very light relatively to the sin, as also they should not be very heavy relatively to the sinner, that he be not overwhelmed by a burden too great for his weakness. *In fine*, the Confessor must consider before imposing penance, and not give the same to all, just as a physician does not give one remedy to all his patients.

To give suitable and salutary penances is the work of a prudent minister of the Lord, guided by His Holy Spirit. Why then are they given with so little reflection? Confessors should never impose extravagant and indiscreet penances; extravagant

¹ B. Leonard 27—29.

are such as are contrary to the ordinary usages of the Church and of good and learned Confessors. Indiscreet would be, to give to servants some work which would interfere with their duty to their master; fasting to an invalid; to a young person a visit to a distant and lonely Church; to a married woman some bodily severity which might displease her husband; or other penances unsuitable to the age, condition, bodily powers, or other circumstances of the penitent.

It is a wise general rule to adapt the penance to the sin; as almsgiving to the covetous; some bodily infliction to the sensual, and so on. For the most part, those are the best penances, which, while they punish past sin, tend to preserve the penitent from future falls. If then the penitent be inclined to relapse, it is well that his penance should last some time; "in order not to heal the wound only but the scar," says S. Chrysostom^k. A vice is most easily cured by a frequent repetition of the remedy. After hearing a confession, give some brief but earnest words of exhortation to your penitent, setting before him the gravity of his faults and then, as S. Charles advises, quote the Penitential Canons, that he may know how rigorously any one such sin was formerly punished. Then add gently, "You deserve certainly a much graver penance, but I will only impose a lighter." Thus you will dispose him to accept his penance willingly.

Various
penances

CCCCXIII. As to penances: 1) If the penitent has committed a great many mortal sins, it would be suitable to impose certain prayers to be said during

^k Hom. 2 in Ps. 50.

eight or fifteen days, and to be said with compunction, for the forgiveness of his past sins and for grace to fall into them no more ; if he has been an habitual sinner, or if a general confession has been necessary by reason of his having kept back sins through shame or some other motive, the same penance may be prolonged, during two or three months, more or less, according to the nature of the bad habit. In this way it often happens that a penitent gains a habit of some prayer which, to the great good of his soul, he retains for the rest of his life. 2) You may impose certain prayers, with an act of contrition, accompanied in the morning with a very firm resolution not to sin through the day and, in the evening not to sin through the night, made kneeling or in some irksome attitude ; this is a very useful means for curing bad habits, if imposed for some length of time. 3) To offer every trial and every action of the coming day ; or some other Christian exercise, including acts of faith hope and charity and daily self-examination ; fixing the time during which these practices are to last. 4) To say daily for a certain time, five *Our Fathers* or other devotions in honour of the Five Wounds of our Lord, pausing at each Wound for meditation on the Passion : and reading some spiritual book. In the case of all these penances, it is well to tell your penitents not to make a scruple if they should be accidentally omitted, but to make up for it the next day ; and that they must not think it a grave fault, if, for some reason, they could not do them. There are other penances suitable to individuals, such as meditation, for half an hour, on certain days, to an ecclesiastic

or educated person; or to one in strong health, with no hindrance, to fast on the Saturday for some time; to the head of the house, a devotion every evening with his family; in the case of one given to blasphemy, making the sign of the Cross on the ground with his tongue¹; abstinence from wine, for a time, or to drink it with water, to a drunkard; with certain uneducated persons, some penance, calculated to impress the imagination, is useful, as e. g., saying certain prayers by a grave, to remind them that they must soon die &c. But always avoid imposing any extravagant or indiscreet penance, which might estrange men from the Sacraments, or bring discredit upon the Church's ministry.

Whether
leniency
or se-
verity is
best.

CCCCXIV. It is frequently asked, whether is best to impose heavy or light penances? I reply, subject to the general rules already given, that it is best to incline to leniency, especially if the penitent would be unwilling or think himself unequal to accept a severe penance. But habitual or back-sliding sinners must be more strictly dealt with, rather running the risk of their neglecting to perform their penance, as a learned casuist says, "lest, making light of those sins, they should commit them the oftener, and confess them without due sorrow, which, as to such persons, is much to be feared^m." But again there are circumstances where the confessor may and ought to relax his severity, giving lighter penances, especially when the penitent heartily abhors his past sins. In such a case, according to S. Thomas, the penance may be propor-

¹ This has not been thought advisable in England.

^m Conink de Sac. dist. 10. dub. 8. n. 73.

tionably diminished; "ⁿThe greater the contrition, so much the more it takes from the fault, and lessens the debt." We find an illustration of this in the Life of S. Vincent Ferrier; who, dealing with a grievous sinner, imposed a severe penance for three years upon him. The penitent, being filled with deep sorrow for his sin, exclaimed that such penance was all too light; whereupon the Saint immediately reduced it from three years to three days. His penitent besought to have it increased, saying that he feared to lose his salvation, with so easy a penance; S. Vincent reduced it still further to three Paters and three Aves. Immediately the penitent died from an excess of contrition, and his soul was seen entering directly into Heaven.

Finally, Meditation on the Cross, in memory of our Saviour's Passion, is one of the most useful penances the Confessor can impose, inasmuch as to think devoutly on the Passion, if only for a short time, is more profitable, and a better preservative against sin, than to fast on bread and water, take the discipline to blood, recite all the Psalms, or the most severe bodily austerities.

He should beware of great severity in the case of general confessions, made rather for edification than of necessity; both because the penitent has usually a more lively contrition, and not being obliged to confess all these sins, since they have been already confessed, the Confessor is not bound to inflict a penance proportioned to their enormity. As to the conditional penances occasionally imposed on relapsers (such as to fast or give alms at each fall) two

ⁿ in 4, dist. 15. q. 1. a. 3.

B b

remarks are necessary ; 1) that they be not too difficult, or they will not be done, and the first time the penitent fails, he imagines he has broken his promise to his Confessor, is discouraged, and begins to sin again without restraint. 2) There are penitents who regard these penances as a tax ; and provided they have paid the tax, in giving their alms, for instance, they continue to sin as before. In any case where almsgiving is enjoined, the Confessor should carefully avoid asking anything for himself, his own church or convent.

Certain
Rules.

CCCCXV°. Thus it will be seen, that the Confessor should be very discreet in the matter of satisfaction or penances, that he may not impose such light ones, as to bring the power of the keys into contempt, or to be a partaker in the sins of his penitents. Neither should he give penances so severe or so long, that penitents refuse to perform them, or, having accepted them, do not fulfil them entirely. Therefore he ought to be acquainted with the penitential Canons, and follow their rules, so far as is expedient, being guided therein by his penitent's circumstances and character. And although he does not impose the penance ordered by the ancient Canons, he should nevertheless exhort the penitent to a greater contrition for his sins, and to perform with more earnestness a less penance enjoined him, profiting by the gentleness of the Church which thus relaxes in his favour the severity of the ancient discipline. He should also take care that satisfaction be in some measure proportioned to the sin, imposing for sins of the flesh, fasts, vigils, wearing hair-

° S. Charles p. 57-62.

cloth &c. which may mortify and fortify the flesh; for sins of avarice, besides the restitutions, to which a penitent is obliged, almsgiving according to ability; for pride, and other spiritual sins, it is well to impose prayers, in which the soul, humbling itself before God, acquires the strength and vigour necessary to resist it. To those who have neglected to learn the things, which all Christians are bound to know, he should give as penance, hearing sermons &c. He will order those who are indevout and indifferent in that which concerns their salvation, to assist in the Divine Office, and to be very assiduous in the practice of prayer.

CCCCXVI. On blasphemers, he ought especially to impose hard penances, according to the extent of their sin, in compliance with the intention of the Sacred Canons, and the regulations of provincial Councils. Nevertheless he must act with prudence, so as not to enjoin almsgiving to the poor, fasts on those who gain their livelihood by toil &c. He must also beware of absolving public and scandalous sinners, without imposing public satisfaction and a penance proportioned to their sins, to the end that, while they correct themselves, they may also make reparation for the scandal they have given to others. In the case of debt to himself, by way of dues &c., which the penitent has evidently no intention to pay, and therefore the Confessor cannot rightly absolve him, he would do well to send him to another Confessor.

CCCCXVII P. The Confessor should inflict penance with kind and comforting words, especially when the sinner is very penitent; and if he sees that what

How to impose penances.

he has enjoined will be very trying to him, it will be better to change it to something easier. It is always more desirable to treat penitents with love and pity, (without indulging their faults, of course) than to be hard and harsh; but it may be well to make them know that, according to the gravity of their sins, they deserve a severer penance, that so they may perform that enjoined them more humbly and devoutly.

Penances should not be intricate and made up of divers devotions, such, for example, as to say three *Our Fathers*, a hymn, collects, orisons, anthems, psalms; nor ought a variety of works to be enjoined, such as to give alms three days, to fast three Fridays, to take the discipline five times; for two inconveniences arise from the accumulation: one is, that the penitent forgets and then lives in a state of scruple; the other, that he thinks more of what he has to say or do, than of what he does or says, and whilst searching his memory for what he ought to do, or his book for what he ought to say, his devotion is chilled.

It is better then to enjoin repetition of the same prayer, as several *Our Fathers*, or consecutive psalms, so that they need not be searching hither and thither to find what comes next; it is also good to give some one thing as penance, such as to read this or that book which you think useful to the penitent, to confess once a month for a year, and the like, trying to make your penances preservative against future sin, as well as punishment for what is past.

Of general
confession
which it is
right to
impose
some-
times.

CCCCXVIII^a. One of the most important obligations to lay upon a penitent, is that of making a gene-

^a Prêtre sanctifié. No. 35.

ral confession. Sometimes you must oblige him to make it, at other times you need only advise him to do so. But, as a spiritual physician, you ought to render it as easy to him as you can, by shewing him how to examine himself, and excite his contrition. Teach him to keep the sins committed since his last special confession apart, and to confess them before or after his general confession; which will enable you better to apply the remedies, by setting before you the present actual condition of his soul, as well as the past. With regard to ignorant people, P. Seigneri says, that, if the penitent in former confessions has accused himself confusedly, it is not necessary to make him repeat every thing exactly, inasmuch as such sins have been remitted, notwithstanding their confused explanation. Generally, persons of this sort are confused, and you can for the most part gain a clearer understanding of their sins, both as to number and circumstances, by judicious questioning, than they could ever give you after the longest self-examination. Do not therefore be alarmed, if they come ill-prepared; if you send them away they will often be troubled and never return: rather question them. But to make general confessions really useful to those who make them, besides instructing them and inducing them to prepare with special care, persuade them for some days to render thanks to God for His help hitherto, that their gratitude may obtain for them the grace of perseverance. It is well to recommend this practice for particular confessions also, which are always acts of great importance, needing special grace.

ARTICLE X.

Of general confessions.

Import-
ance of a
general
confes-
sion

CCCCXIX^r. You will sometimes find it difficult to make the need for a general confession understood. Your penitent, when counselled to use this means of spiritual progress, will perhaps ask, "why should I distress my conscience with a general confession? Thank God, I have never concealed anything, and in every confession I carefully sought to attain a true sorrow for sin, and a firm resolution of amendment. So far I have gone on in perfect good faith; what is the good of disturbing myself now with a general confession?" If this be all really so, no doubt it is unnecessary; but a missionary, whose experience was very great, used to say that he had heard many general confessions, in which the penitents began by saying, that they had not come out of any necessity, merely for edification and devotion; yet these same persons, when helped by the good father to examine their conscience, and to reflect upon the wanderings of their past life, would at last cry out, in amazement at their own self-deceit, in believing that hitherto they had concealed nothing, and had had true contrition and firm resolutions! rejoicing unspeakably that they had been led to supply the deficiency by this general confession at last. Picture to yourself a hunter entering a thick forest which is full of wild animals; perhaps he goes

^r B. Leonard. *Traité de la Conf. générale.*

hither and thither, scarcely seeing a head of game ; but if, after a time, the forest is fired at the four corners, all the beasts, that have their hiding places in the dense wilderness, come pouring forth in every direction. A general confession resembles this. Many a thing which has been forgotten, especially if the penitent be negligent, comes to light, things which perhaps would have disturbed him cruelly, when he comes to die. A general confession sets fire to the four corners of a man's conscience, and purifies it thoroughly. You say, that you have always acted in good faith ; but do you know quite what you mean by that ? It implies, that you have used all requisite earnestness in making good confessions ; not merely in accusing yourself of all your faults, but exciting in your heart (as far as human infirmity allows,) a true contrition and a sincere intention of amendment, so that, having corrected your faults, you may, by the help of God's grace, live in full peace of conscience, without any misgiving as to the validity of previous confessions. How can you, who began even in childhood to throw off the yoke of Christ ; who sullied your youth with sin, which was not cast aside in riper years ; who perhaps lead no holier a life in your old age : how can you dare to say that you have no reason to mistrust your intentions or the validity of your past confessions ? How can one believe, that you have really acted in good faith ? And if there is such ground for doubt, can you really be solicitous for your soul's health, and not be ready to do whatever lies in your power, and repair the lamentable deficiencies of past confessions, by a good general confession ?

Hurtful
general
confes-
sion.

CCCCXX. At the same time, it is well to bear in mind that general confessions are *hurtful* to certain persons; *useful* to a great many; and absolutely *necessary* to others. They are hurtful to some very scrupulous and timid people, who, although they have already made several general confessions, perpetually torment themselves and their Confessor on the subject. Such minds are not numerous; but when you have to deal with them, you must be very charitable, and try to comfort them as far as possible, according to the time you can spare from others. Make them understand that disobedience to their spiritual father in the matter of scruples is not devotion, but mere obstinacy, and that they will never have any peace, save by submitting their own judgement to his. Such persons as these fancy they will cure their scruples by making their general confession anew; whereas in fact, it is the surest way of adding to their unrest. They are like one whose eyes are inflamed, and who perpetually adds to the inflammation by rubbing them; just so, a perpetual friction of the conscience increases scruple and anxiety of mind. Accordingly, make a rule never to allow those who have made their general confession, and amended their lives, and have quiet consciences, and are not conscious of any intentional bad faith in past confessions, to reiterate it. It is a good plan to advise such penitents to make a review since their general confession, so as to learn all the windings of their conscience; and in this, if it seems desirable, you can allow these troubled souls to mention whatever specially distresses them, enforcing silence as to all the rest. But this must be left to

the discretion of the Confessor, who will be able to judge how far, in individual cases, to allow any return to what concerns the past life. As a general rule, the best advice to such penitents is, to make frequent acts of contrition, which will tend to give peace to their soul far more than continual examination and accusation. Put clearly before them S. Thomas's doctrine, interpreted by S. Antoninus; i. e. that when a person, who sincerely desires to be reconciled to God, has done all in his power to make a good confession, and to obtain true contrition; 1) his confession is a good one; 2) there is no occasion to make it again, and a renewal of contrition will make it sure. Thus, if they frequently repeat acts of contrition those acts will sometimes be real; and this will suffice, without a fresh accusation of the sins already submitted to the keys of the Church. All this applies only to those who are really scrupulous, God-fearing men, who have made their past confessions in good faith; not to those pretending, hypocritical people, who combine vice with scrupulosity, dwelling upon trifles with Pharisaical minuteness, while they "drink iniquity like water;" and are guilty of all manner of irregularities. Such scrupulous persons as these require to be enlightened and taught to fear God truly, to change their lives really, and repair their many past bad confessions by a good general confession.

CCCCXXI. General confession is *useful* to many. I can hardly enumerate all its advantages, both in life, and at the hour of death. To many it is the beginning of a holy life; experience teaching us, that many persons amend their lives and persevere

General
confession
useful.

steadily after a general confession. They are like people wearing beautiful new garments, who take special care not to soil them. So the soul, clothed with the garment of the grace of God, by means of a general confession, takes more precautions, not to fall again into the mire of sin. Numberless persons have made this the starting point of a life reformed on Gospel principles, and have overcome vices which, before, had seemed remediless. Accordingly the first advice to give any one who is seeking to lead a new life is, that he cast aside the old man, and put on the new man, by the help of a good general confession. The same advice is good in the case of those who are entering upon Religion, or Holy Orders, or even marriage; as also sometimes of those who are leaving a busy life for quiet retirement, the care of their soul, and to give themselves wholly to God. In all such cases a good general confession fills us with deeper contrition for past sin, and a greater desire to lead a better life. It is a very different thing to be conscious of faults here and there, and to see them all displayed before us at once. A scattered army does not excite much alarm, but, when the soldiers are ranged in order of battle, men's hearts fail them. For this reason many Saints have repeated their general confession several times during the course of their lives. The Venerable Archbishop of Valentia, don Juan de Ribera, whose sanctity is held in admiration throughout Spain, made his general confession six times; S. Charles Borromeo made it annually. Now certainly these holy men did not do so because of scruples, but because of the great profit their souls attained thereby, in a more

profound self-contempt, a more lively contrition, and a firmer resolution to lead a perfect life. S. Fr. de Sales, extolling the practice of general confession, says that "it inspires us with a wholesome shame of our past life, and fills us with fresh admiration for the mercy of God, making us love Him more fervently henceforth."

CCCCXXII. If a general confession is helpful in life, who would not wish to have made it, and made it well, when he comes to die? But if a man waits till then, how can he hope to succeed? Surely Christian prudence bids us all to look forward, and be ready, before that hour arrives; in the spirit of our Lord's oft-repeated precept, "Watch;" and, "Be ye also ready." He does not bid us open our eyes, just as we are on the point of closing them for ever, or to prepare for death; when a long illness leaves us no room to doubt that it is at hand; but He bids us watch, and so make ready that, whensoever the hour of death may come, it shall find us prepared. A certain Aragonese courtier once sought a Mission-Father, asking to make his general confession; the Father inquired into his motives. "Must I not die some day?" was the answer, "and how shall I, who have led an unholy life, die peacefully without making a general confession? But when my hour of death comes, my wife, my children, fear, the violence of the disease, will take away all my presence of mind. How imprudent it would be, to leave it to be made amid so many difficulties; therefore I wish to seize the present opportunity." Even careless people feel the need of a general confession, when face to face with death. A Religious, who

was in the habit of visiting prisons, was accosted by a criminal, whose execution was fixed for the morrow, and who wished to make his general confession. The Father inquired into his motives? "Father, I die to-morrow," he answered, "and if I am not ready, what will become of me? Must I not do what I can?" Our Lord Himself calls those blessed who are prepared to die; and surely none are more fitly described by the words, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching." Besides, such as have made themselves ready by a good general confession, die with so much peace and resignation to God's Will, and are so comforted by these evident marks of His grace, that we can scarce help envying them. Test yourself by lying down this night upon your bed, as though it were your grave; close your eyes, fold your hands upon your breast, and ask yourself what, when you really come to die, you will wish you had done? If in your heart you feel that you would wish to have made your general confession, do not delay to make it now. Do not be deceived by the devil; whenever he sees any one with the salutary intention of doing so, he tries to persuade him that there is plenty of time, and then he raises one hindrance or another, until the mortal sickness comes; then heart and brain fail, and his victim dies miserably. Do not be deceived thus: be sure that no one ever regretted having made his general confession, though many a dying man has been filled with bitter regret for having neglected to make it at all.

General
confes-
sion a
necessity

CCCCXXIII. There are other persons to whom a general confession [is the best way of remedying

the defects which made their former confessions useless.] They may be divided into seven classes. I. Those who from shame or any other motive have deliberately concealed some mortal sin from their confessor. II. Those who, although their consciences are laden with mortal sin, have confessed without any, or with a very careless self-examination. III. Those who have intentionally divided their confession, making part to one, part to another Confessor, so as to avoid telling the whole to the same priest. IV. Those who have confessed without any sorrow, without any previous act of contrition or attrition, out of habit or form; as if the mere enumeration of sins to a priest were all that is required. V. Those who have confessed without any really good resolutions, who do not amend their lives; and who change their Confessor in order to avoid changing their lives; thus deliberately living and dying in evil ways. VI. Those who have lived in an immediate occasion of sin which they might have removed, but would not; yet all the while have been to confession. VII. Those who, when capable of making restitution and bound to do so, refused. Or harbouring some hatred in their hearts, would not forgive their neighbour, and yet have continued to frequent the tribunal of penance, notwithstanding these evil dispositions. [To make good such confessions], these persons should make a general confession of all the time elapsed since they consciously began to make such imperfect confessions; and their self-examination should be as strict, as if they had never confessed at all during that period. We are not speaking of those persons who have done their best to make good confessions

in all good faith ; but of those who have consciously made bad confessions. Take an instance of the first of these cases. "It appears that you have concealed a sin during ten, twenty, or thirty years, though it recurred to your mind every time you confessed ; you knew that you were bound to confess it, but shame kept you silent. I must tell you that you ought to make a general confession of all your sins during those years." "If so, Father, I ought to make a general confession of my whole life, although I am sixty or seventy ; for, ever since my childhood, I have kept back certain sins which I always remembered, yet never confessed." "But why did you not confess them ?" "I fancied that while I was a mere child, I was incapable of sin." "How old were you, when guilty of these sins ?" "Seven or eight or thereabouts." "When you did these bad actions, did you hide yourself for fear of being seen ?" "Yes, Father." "Were you afraid of being punished by your superiors ?" "Yes, Father." "If so, it is probable that you had sufficient knowledge, to be guilty of sin ; but further, had you any doubt that these things were sins ?" "Sometimes I doubted a little." "Why, all this time, have you never consulted some good confessor as to your doubts ?" "I was kept back by shame." "There is no other way but to make a general confession of your whole life ; your guilt is sufficiently proved by your having had doubts, and yet having deliberately kept them back."

Some confessors are content with asking a penitent if he has concealed any thing out of shame ? and if he answers no, they tell him that a general confession is unnecessary, as though want of sincer-

ity were the only thing that makes it indispensable. But this is a great and cruel mistake. Above all, do not discourage two classes of people from general confession; those who have never made it, since all the masters of the spiritual life agree in considering it necessary to be made once; and those who, having lived in some bad habit, have gone on making confession from time to time without any amendment. S. Charles says that you should not merely receive such charitably, but you should exhort them to make their general confession, since even if it were not absolutely necessary, it would be most beneficial. You are a physician of souls, and surely the physician is bound to do every thing in his power to be of use to his patient? Else we may indeed say in the words of Jesus Christ, that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

CCCCXXIV. Taking for granted, that confessors and penitents are alike convinced of the benefit of general confession; it remains to point out the best way of setting to work; for the devil is only too ready to raise every kind of difficulty, in order to hinder so good a work. Some persons feel, as though it would be impossible to disentangle the inextricable confusion, in which their conscience is; and others shudder at the very mention of a general confession. But have patience, and, by God's grace, you will see that all these mountains disappear. All your difficulties resolve themselves into two; making your self-examination, and telling the number of your sins. With respect to the first, one who has led a very uniform life can easily accomplish it, and make a

The way to
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general confession of several years in few words. But a person whose conduct has been less uniform, meets with two considerable difficulties ; his conscience is so confused, that he knows not where or how to begin, so that some such will spend days in writing and re-writing their sins, being only more confused at the end ; and again, having ascertained what their sins are, they do not know how to describe them suitably and duly ; the result being—say fourteen long stories in order to confess fourteen sins which might be told in as many words. I would suggest two ways of meeting these difficulties. First, select a confessor who is both wise and kind, and then put yourself entirely into his hands ; beg him to help you and question you, and all will become easy ; you, meanwhile, of course not neglecting so to examine yourself as to be able to answer properly whatever he may ask. The other expedient is a dialogue between confessor and penitent⁷, which I will set before you, as an illustration, which may help you to prepare your own confession. As to writing it—if you do so, write it briefly, in heads, only putting down the quality and quantity of your sins. Cut off all that is superfluous, all histories of facts, and accessory circumstances. They tend only to distract your mind and waste precious time. Books should be cautiously used ; some, confusing mortal and venial sins, and describing in too much detail what should only be just mentioned, only confuse the penitent. A little girl once asked her confessor's leave to make her general confession, and to use a particular book for the purpose. She had leave. She

⁷ The dialogue is omitted. See note p. 391.

wrote down all the sins which she found in the book, whatever their enormity, to the infinite horror of the priest. "But my child," he asked, "have you really done all this?" "God forbid, Father," she answered, "I wrote them down because they were in the book."

There is one book which will not deceive you, the book of conscience. Read it, and you will discover all your sins, especially if helped by the questions of a good confessor. This applies principally to persons of no great education, who do not know how to say any thing, unless they are questioned. Confessors should bear in mind, that they are not to expect from such people what they are bound to look for in those more educated, and that we are only obliged to question them so as to supplement their self-examination, and set them at rest.

CCCCXXV. There remains one doubt on the subject of self-examination; whether it is to be exercised as to sins of impurity, which may be revived in thought, by self-examination or confession? If this doubt be well-founded, people should never examine themselves on these heads, or make ordinary confessions concerning them. But, in truth, I believe that most sinners who have fallen into such foul sins, need a general confession; indeed these are the very persons who most frequently conceal their sins through shame; who divide their confession, or confess without sorrow or firm purpose of amendment, sometimes relapsing on the very day of the confession. The confessor will however take care to ask, and the penitent to tell nothing but what is absolutely necessary, i.e., the number and kind of sins, without going into any particulars; and as those

A doubt with regard to the examination.

whose duty takes them among infectious illnesses, are wont to carry some disinfectant about them, so should confessors have holy thoughts at hand to disperse the painful impressions caused by what they are constrained to hear. I do not approve of the system adopted by some confessors, who make their penitents go through their different periods of life; childhood, youth, mature life, and old age, returning to the sins of each. Of course self-examination upon all these is requisite, but as some sins will have been committed, all through, from the force of habit, this system involves a repetition of the same sin; and that without any occasion; for the difference of age does not alter the nature of the sin. Others do still worse. They assign different days, on which to make the general confession; one for sins before marriage; another for those after it; or if a penitent has been guilty of twenty sins of one kind, they make him to tell each separately, explaining all circumstances, more or less important. It is this treatment which makes people dread a general confession, as so extremely difficult; and by this means the Confessor's lack of skill makes the Saviour's yoke heavy, instead, of, as it really is, easy and light.

One thing more; do not examine yourself as to venial sins; you are quite right to confess these exactly in ordinary confessions, but in a general confession any detailed examination will only perplex and confuse you. They are not necessary to your confession: it is enough to have contrition for them, and accuse yourself of them generally at the end of the confession. S. Thomas assures us that you may then feel quite certain of their remission[†].

[†] In 4 d. 21. q. 1. art. 1.

CCCCXXVI. The greatest difficulty in a general confession, is to tell the exact number of sins. Your rule should be: if you know the exact number of your sins, tell it accurately. Some penitents, when questioned on this point, will say that they have committed a sin four or five times, when they know that they have committed it five times; this is not right. If they know it to be five times, they should say so. If you do not know the precise number, at all events say what is probable, and try to keep as near to the truth as possible. Say for instance, "I have committed this sin about ten or twelve times, about twenty or twenty-five times;" because the word "about" will suffice, and not expose you to untruth.

On confessing the precise number of sins.

If you cannot be at all clear as to the probable number, then explain the duration and frequency of the sin. E.g. "When I was fifteen, a bad companion taught me such a sin, and I committed it two or three times a week, until I was thirty, and since then at intervals once a week, or sometimes I may have been free for a week." "When I was twenty, I formed a bad connexion, which lasted till I was twenty-five—I generally fell into sin once a week, or fortnight, or month, &c." You ask if such accusation is sufficient? Why not? I would that every one accused himself as distinctly. In this way the difficulties disappear, and you may comfort yourself by the recollection, that so definite a numerical mention of sins is not required in a general confession, as in your ordinary confessions; and that, because it is often a moral impossibility; and God in His Goodness never exacts anything which is beyond our strength. When a penitent is perplexed,

you should not press him in this respect. An old man, who has lived in a habit of evil thoughts, cannot tell how frequently he consented to them, but he will say whatever you do. If you ask if he has lied a thousand times? he will say, "Yes, a thousand times;" and if you say, ten thousand times, he will say so too, because he does not know what else to say. In such cases, where it is impossible to ascertain either the certain or probable number, it is enough to know the bad habit, and how many years it lasted; and thus the confessor will understand his penitent's condition as far as may be, bad habits being taken in their ordinary sense, so long as the exact number of falls is not of importance, as it is in the case of thefts, where more exactness is necessary. But in other cases, where the penitent is ignorant or perplexed, it is enough, if the confessor has some idea of the number: and if he finds that questions only add to this perplexity, he may pass on, forming an approximate idea in his own mind, without putting his poor penitent to any further torture, since, as says S. Thomas, "in confession what any cannot do, is not required of him."

The exceeding advantage of a general confession.

CCCCXXVII. The benefits of a general confession being thus great, who would not strive to kindle in his own heart such contrition as that of the penitent Hezekiah, when he said with tears to God, "I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul?" S. Bernard, commenting upon his history, says that, in order to shew how greatly He prizes such contrition, God immediately granted Hezekiah fifteen years of life, in order that his repentance and sorrow

^u In 4, q. 17 q. 3, a. 4.

for sin might also be prolonged. Accordingly we find that almost all eminent saints have laid the foundation of their holiness upon a general confession. S. Ignatius, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, exhorts all who seek a perfect conversion to God to begin thus; and we read that the congregation of the Lazarites arose through the impression entertained by S. Vincent de Paul of the great value of general confessions; one of the express objects of his *Missionary Fathers* being to hear the general confessions of the most ignorant people, whose consciences are the most entangled. Neither is it a modern invention. General confessions were customary among the holy Fathers and Monks of the desert. S. John Climacus relates the history of a great sinner, who came to one of their monasteries, desiring to become a monk. The Abbot, a man of eminent virtue, wished to subject him to a test of his sincerity, and required him to make confession of all the sins of his past life. The youth, full of fervour, did this, writing down at once all his faults, and reading them out before the whole community. This he did with such humility and contrition, that no one could doubt that his vocation was from God. While he was thus reading, a venerable monk saw an angel effacing the sins from the list which he had in his hands. S. Chrysostom calls a general confession a second Baptism, purifying the soul from all past sin, and redeeming lost time; “redeeming the time, because the days are evil,” as S. Paul says. How can we redeem time? S. Bernard answers, by means of a general confession, wherein the penitent redeems the past by

▼ in Cor. c. 5.

▼ Eph. v. 16.

thorough examination of his sins, confirms the present by true contrition, and secures the future by good resolutions. “*Time is divided into present, past, and future; none of these does he lose, who repents aright.” A good general confession in some sort renews in a degree our baptismal innocence, purifying the soul and making it clean in the sight of God.

Cæsarius tells an affecting story to this point. A young student in Paris, who had led a very profligate life, suddenly touched by the word of God went to a Cistercian monk, to make his general confession. But he wept so bitterly, that he could scarcely utter a word; whereupon the good Father bade him write his confession, which he did, and brought the list to his confessor. When however the confessor read it, he found there such grievous crimes and such unwonted cases, that he dared not trust his own judgement, and asked the penitent's leave to consult the Abbot concerning it. This was readily given. The Abbot took the paper to read it, and found it one blank. There were only a few traces, such as one makes to erase words. “What would you have me read herein?” he asked; “there is nothing written.” The confessor, who had but just read the writing, was exceedingly amazed. They called the young man, to ask if this was indeed the paper, on which he had written his general confession? He replied that it was, and then they perceived that God had effaced the written confession, to shew, that by reason of the penitent's exceeding contrition, which His mercy had given him, He had blotted out all his sins likewise out of His book, and thus his soul was become

* de tripl. stat. animæ.

beautiful and pure in His eyes. Nevertheless they advised the grateful penitent to make his confession and receive sacramental Absolution, which he did, firmly purposing to change his life entirely, to satisfy the world, which he had scandalized by the enormity of his sins.

A general confession completes all past confessions which have been imperfectly made; it excites a deeper contrition in our souls; uproots all vices and criminal affections; wins the Divine Mercy to forgive us all that is past; comforts the penitent, disposes him to receive fresh grace in this life, and eternal glory in the next*.

The first rule I would give as to the profitable hearing of general confessions, is that you treat your penitent as you would wish to be treated yourself, were you in his place. Receive him kindly, let him see that you care for him, so that he may feel confidence in you, and not hesitate to shew himself honestly to you. Avoid all rude uncourteous expressions, the result of a harsh zeal, which tend rather to irritate and exasperate, than to make a penitent docile, obedient and contrite. And if he

Rules to be
observed
in hearing
general
confes-
sions.

* In the original there is inserted here from B. Leonard, a "Dialogue between the Confessor and penitent, both being assisted by a Director, who suggests to the one how to interrogate, and to the other how to reply." I thought it not suited to our circumstances. See the Preface. Although then in Latin in the original, I thought it best to omit the dialogue altogether, since its object was to instruct a young confessor, how to put the questions, and, in our circumstances, it would be unwise to put them at all. On the other commandments, the dialogue seemed to me rather meagre. I have only retained then two or three pieces of general advice. Ed.

should prove coarse and ignorant, or even rebellious and obstinate, do not rebuke him harshly, or scare him by excessive severity. Remember, that in the confessional you should be a martyr of patience, always striving to lead your penitents by gentleness and sympathy rather than by austerity. Gentle reasoning will make the holy verities of the faith sink into his soul, and you will find him subdued and convinced. In a word, treat your penitent, as you would be treated yourself.

If you find that he is living in some immediate occasion of sin, or subject to some bad habit, without any firm resolution of amendment, and without any sign of compunction, it is useless to hear his general confession; because the object of such a confession is not merely to remedy the past, but also as the beginning of a really new life; and if the penitent has no intention of this kind, the whole thing is purposeless.

And you, the penitent, should come to your confessor in a spirit of obedience and with a firm intention of opening your heart to him thoroughly; intending to make your general confession as though it were your last, and you were about to be summoned before God's Own tribunal; above all, you must make it with a fixed determination really to lead a new life henceforth. Do not diverge into useless histories; if you have even written your confession, but disorderly and with irrelevant relations, and the confessor advises you to lay aside what you have written, and go on according to his questions, obey; you cannot be wrong in so doing.

Some Confessors begin with examining the penitent's knowledge of the Faith, especially of the mys-

teries which are “*de necessitate medii*.” But my experience is, that to begin with this has a chilling effect, and that you can instruct him more profitably, after he has unburdened his mind by his confession. Do you, penitent, be sincere in your self-accusation ; one false palliation or reservation may neutralise all the good of your confession. Open your heart to your confessor, and tell him your faults with child-like simplicity and candour ; just as one friend tells all his most important secrets to another, from whom he expects every possible sympathy and help. If you know the certain number of your faults, say so ; and do not wait each time to be questioned ; if not, tell the probable number, or at least the extent and frequency of your falls. If you are too confused, even to be able to do this, say, for how many years you have been liable to such or such a bad habit, and that you yielded to it many times, so that your confessor may understand the state of your conscience, as far as possible.

The Confessor must not allow his penitent to go into the details of his enmities, both because nothing can justify hatred, and because talking of past injuries revives bad feeling. So far from kindling any compunction, it does but re-open the sores and multiply sins, even in the confession. He must, however, require the penitent to be reconciled, if he would be absolved, and to give signs of ordinary good-will according to circumstances. If the penitent refuses, he must not be absolved. If he promises seriously, especially if he have never promised others, he may be absolved. However, this presupposes, that there is no time to be reconciled with his neighbour : for,

ordinarily, reconciliation ought to precede absolution. As to the number of sins of hatred, it is morally impossible to obtain a certain or probable number, and it is enough to tell their frequency, and the length of time they have lasted.

The penitent is bound to confess, not only his own sins, but also those he may have caused others to commit.

Further, the Confessor must enquire into the individual duties of his penitent, according to his position as a guardian, trustee, executor, patron of livings, physician, lawyer, judge, magistrate, &c. each of these having its special duties and responsibilities; also as to any vows he may have made, his almsgiving, &c. But all these subjects have been already treated separately. Before coming to an end, the confessor should explain to his penitent that, if anything has been left unasked or unsaid, it should now be told, so as to leave no uneasiness behind.

He will then examine into the penitent's knowledge of the Faith, causing him, if necessary, to make acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition. Of course this is not requisite with those who are already well instructed, though, if you have reason to think that they have been careless in such matters, it may be well to move them to repeat similar acts now.

Brief statement of the chief Articles of the Christian faith.

The principal mysteries of our holy Faith, which every good Christian ought of necessity to be explicitly acquainted with, are: "the Unity of God, and the Trinity; God, the Rewarder; the Incarnation, the Death and Resurrection of the Redeemer; that is to say, that there is only One God in Three distinct Persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This great God is a Rewarder, that is, He gives Paradise

to the good, and assigns hell to the wicked. Of these three Persons, the Second, that is to say, the Son, came into the world, where He took upon Him our human nature, and was called Jesus Christ, our Lord: He suffered death for us, and He rose again from the dead." It is necessary to know and believe all this explicitly, if we wish to be saved.

Act of faith. "I believe, O my God, that Thou art one Only God in Three Equal Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: I believe that the Son became Man: that He died for us on the Cross: that He rose from the dead: that He ascended into Heaven, whence He will come again to judge all mankind, in order to grant to the good His holy paradise, and to adjudge to the wicked the eternal torments of hell. I believe all this, because it is true, O infallible Truth, Who hast revealed it to Thy Holy Church!"

[Acts of faith, hope, love, and repentance, which might be suggested]

Act of Hope. "I hope, O my God, that Thou wilt grant me the pardon of my sins, grace in this life, and eternal glory in the next, through the merits of Jesus Christ, [and that Thou wilt accept] the good works, which I hope to perform by the help of Thy grace; I hope, O my God, because Thou art merciful and Almighty."

Act of the Love of God. "My God, I love Thee above all things, because Thou art the Sovereign Good, and for love of Thee, I do love and will love my neighbour as myself."

Act of repentance. "My Lord Jesus Christ, I repent that I have ever offended Thee, because Thou art an Infinite Good, and I resolve never to offend Thee again."

The confessor will then give the penitent some brief exhortation, leading him to detest his past sins

more heartily, and to begin an altogether new life. The penance must then be imposed, and the penitent dismissed in peace with God's blessing.

CCCCXXIX. *Before giving Absolution, ask your penitent, if he desires in all humility the remission of his sins; if he hopes for this grace through the merits of the Death and Passion of our Lord; if he heartily wills, henceforth to live in obedience and in the fear of God. Then teach him that this Absolution, which you will pronounce on earth, will be accepted and confirmed in Heaven, angels and saints rejoicing to see a sinner restored to God's grace; and exhort him so to live henceforth, that at the hour of death he may reap the fruit of this confession, and, that, having washed his conscience in the Blood of the spotless Lamb of God, he give good heed to soil it no more.

The way to
give ab-
solution.

* S. Fr. de Sales. p. 629.

On the Sacramental Seal.

CCCCXXX^a. In your personal behaviour in the confessional, you should not only place a check over your eyes and lips, but that watchfulness should extend to a generally recollected manner; in order that every thing may promote the respect due to God's minister, the holiness of this Sacrament, and the secrecy of whatever passes within the sacred tribunal. Thus, whatever you may hear and feel, never allow yourself to betray the slightest external sign of emotion, which may either disturb the penitent, or, if noticed by any third person, may interfere with the most inviolable secrecy. If you are one of those, who, not to forget questions or advice, mark them by the fingers, do this so as not to let any who observe you, guess anything. At the close of your functions, especially when they have occupied you for any length of time, thank God for His assistance; and finally, give the most careful heed to observe the sacramental seal. If you have to consult other confessors on any case, take care never to mention useless matters, which might indicate the culprit, or cause it to be suspected who he is: you cannot be too careful to preserve the seal of confession inviolable.

Regard for
the seal of
confes-
sion.

CCCCXXXI. I need hardly say, how wrong it is of Confessors ever to talk of what they have heard in confession. Even if there be no plain breach of sacramental secrecy, it may be indirectly endangered; or at all events there is a risk of lowering the respect, in which so sacred a ministration should be held, and of increasing the already great difficulty

Abuse on
this point.

^a Prêtre Sanctifié. no. 130—135.

of making a sincere confession. Remarks as to the vices peculiar to a place, or, as to the average to whom you gave absolution that morning, even saying that you have confessed such or such a person, are mischievous; and nothing is more objectionable than remarks made before laity, at table for instance, half in joke, concerning confession or penance; this Sacrament is too sacred to be made the subject of trifling. The same thing applies to general discussion as to things heard in confession among priests, other persons being present; who will very likely imagine that, when alone together, you would talk still less guardedly. Who can tell that such a suspicion might not easily influence the sincerity of their confessions, or keep them altogether from confession, out of fear of such a crime? Certainly, we priests should be the first to refuse to make our confession, if we did not thoroughly believe in the seal of secrecy. Let us then be most reserved in all we say, so that a doubt as to our inviolable secrecy may never be raised in the mind of any one.

The error
of asking
the names
of the
penitent's
accomplices.

CCCCXXXII. Benedict XIV., in his three Constitutions, "*Suprema, Ubi primum*, and *ad eradicandum*," speaks strongly against the abuse of causing any one to tell the name of an accomplice, in confession, under pretext of correcting him, and hindering the evil. Never ask then the name of any accomplice, and if the penitent wishes to mention it, you should prevent him; and if he asks you to admonish any such accomplice, never undertake to do so, but rather suggest some other means of attaining the object. I will go still further; if your penitent asks you in confession to do anything for him, advise him

to speak to you out of that sacred tribunal respecting it, in order better to preserve the secrecy of it, and not to bring odium upon that ordinance.

CCCCXXXIII. Arming yourself with such precautions, and striving to cultivate those habits of mind, which will most promote the penitent's advantage, give yourself assiduously to the administration of this sacrament, which will tend to your own spiritual profit, as well as that of your neighbour; so that in your last hour you will find great comfort in having laboured diligently therein. At that last moment, your crucifix will speak words of confidence to your heart: "Faithful servant, thou hast, at the cost of thine own labour, toiled for thy brethren's salvation; be not afraid, I will come to thee, and lead thee to My Kingdom." May God grant that it be so with both you and me!

An exhortation to confession.

CCCCXXXIV^b. You see therefore, that the Confessor cannot be too careful to observe the sacramental seal. Of course it is an established rule that he may not speak of things heard in confession, if there is the smallest fear of betraying them directly or indirectly, or of causing any annoyance to the penitent, and the same silence is to be observed, even when the Confessor cannot feel quite sure, whether the thing in question was told him in confession or not. Certainly he may speak generally of a sin told in confession, when it is impossible that the penitent should be known, or when the penitent has given him express permission to do so; but even here, great discretion should be used. Thus, 1) such things should not be spoken of before uneducated people,

As regards that which comes under the seal of confession.

^b S. Liguori, no. 112.

who might suspect that you were revealing a confession; 2) you should not, when preaching, allude to the prevalence of a particular vice in the place you are in, your knowledge of that vice having been obtained in the confessional, and the place being small; or in a community, you should not dwell too forcibly on faults known to you in the same way. 3) The Confessor should beware of pressing a penitent to allow him to speak of any thing told in confession, since he is not even permitted to use such permission unless it be altogether spontaneous and perfectly voluntary. If there is any absolute necessity, it is safer to induce the penitent to speak of it out of confession. You are aware that, out of confession, you have no right to speak to the penitent himself of what he has confessed, without his express consent, though you may do so in confession, if you believe it desirable for the penitent's welfare. 4) You cannot ask the name of any accomplice, and a priest who refused absolution, because a penitent would not reveal this, would incur suspension "*ferendæ sententiæ*." Even under obligation, on pain of mortal sin, to make known his accomplice in order to repair a common injury, I have maintained (against other theologians) that then too a confessor cannot oblige him to reveal his accomplice; only he may and ought to oblige him to make known his accomplice to other persons who can remedy the scandal. But if the penitent wished of his own accord to reveal it to his confessor, the latter may hear it, and remedy the evil by suitable means. Nevertheless, you are not forbidden to ask such questions as are necessary to discover whether the sin is of a different nature,

in order to assure the salvation of the penitent: namely, whether the accomplice be a relation, or inhabiting the same house, or a servant, or bound by vows, and such like, although the answer may inevitably tell you indirectly, who the person is; but in no case may you ask the name.

CCCCXXXV^e. The confessor must above all things beware of indicating either sinner or sin by any word or sign, or any other way of making known any circumstance, which could lead to any discovery of the person with whom it has been committed, or any thing which he has heard in confession, which can give any knowledge of the least sin confessed; and if he is obliged to ask advice regarding any difficult case, he must ask it of such people and in such a manner, as that the penitent cannot be known. For this reason it is well, never to talk of any sins heard in confession, and never to do so even with the penitent himself, without his own permission, nor in any manner except in the act and under the seal of confession.

Advice
on the
same
subject.

CCCCXXXVI^d. Without dwelling beyond bounds on the sacramental seal, I think I ought to set some practical considerations before you, which are dictated by prudence, and which will be a safeguard against any mistakes or uneasiness on this matter. You know the universally received doctrine as to the sacramental seal, to which we are bound by the laws of nature as well as those of God and the Church. Consequently we ought to adopt the principle, that what is said to us in confession is as

Continu-
ation.

^e S. Charles p. 62, 63.

^d B. Leonard. nos 30 et 31. 1re partie.

though it had never been said. There is no excuse for those who talk indiscreetly of what has been learned in confession, as if it had been said publicly. Not with ever so good intentions, and without any mention of individuals! No Confessor should ever give the slightest suspicion, that he is alluding to what he has heard in the tribunal; but he should remember the Canonical warning; "What I know through confession, I know less, than what I do not know*." Pope Eugenius says that whatever a Confessor knows in this way, he knows it "ut Deus;" while out of confession he is only speaking "ut homo:" so that, "as man," he can say that he does not know that which he has learned as God's representative. I go further still: "As man, he may swear with a clear conscience that he knows not, what he knows only as God†." May the Confessor then speak, when he wants advice as to cases which he cannot decide alone? The Canon‡ "Omnis utriusque sexus" authorises us to consult others, as long as we run no risk of exposure to the penitent; e. g., why say, that the case has come before you in confession? Discuss it, as though it were an abstract question, or one that had arisen elsewhere. Where there are several priests in a mission, do not discuss this sort of thing publicly, but only with such one of them as is most able to advise you; and avoid all such unbecoming remarks concerning your work, as, "The first penitent I confessed to-day," &c. "the first woman who came to me yesterday;" &c. "I had a terrible case this morning;" &c. "a young man who made his

* Cap. Si sacerdos de offic. jud. or.

† Quodlib. 12. art. 16. sup. 3.

‡ De Pœnit.

general confession to me in such a place," &c.; "A nobleman, who came to me in such a mission," &c. To one who comes with so many sins, "I generally give such or such a penance." "The first woman who confessed to me this year was guilty of" &c. "Of the great number of penitents, whom I confessed to-day, there were scarce two or three, who were guilty only of venial sins" &c. By speaking in this way, do you not see that you run a risk of letting some penitent be recognised, and of violating the seal of confession? It has been matter of discussion, whether to speak generally of sins heard in confession, without reference to any individual, is a breach of the seal. Fagnan decides that to speak of such, even while it is certain that the sinner will remain unknown, "^his to be done rarely by one of *great* gravity, more rarely by a grave man, most rarely by one not grave." In short, the Confessor should be uniformly silent and circumspect; in the confessional speaking so low, that he could not be overheard, and considering all that he hears there, as though he had not heard it.

I will conclude my remarks upon the Confessor's duties, with a notable warning. A certain person who lived in proximate occasion of sin with a guilty person, unhappily for himself, found a Confessor, whose indulgence was so great, that absolution was regularly given, although the penitent made no attempt to put away the occasion of sin. His wife, a woman of great piety, sought to arouse his conscience, and to make him question these absolutions, given without removing the occasion, but in vain. Her husband laughed

^h Cap. officii de Pœn. et rem.

at her, "you would act the theologian ! Do you take care of your own soul : I will take care of mine. If my confessor could not absolve me, he would not." He continued to live as before, and to confess as before. The confession he made in death was similar to those made in life. Soon after, as the widow was praying in her oratory, she beheld a terrific vision of one man borne on the shoulders of another, both wrapped in flames. She wished to flee. "No," it was said, "stop ; I am the soul of your husband : he who carries me is the soul of my confessor. We are both damned ; I for confessing ill, and he for having absolved me ill." The vision then disappeared.

General Summary.

Advice to
confessors.

CCCCXXXVII. 'To sum up all my instructions, I will specially point out some of the chief things, to which you should give most heed in the exercise of your sacred ministry.

1. Above all things, use the greatest charity towards sinners, both in receiving them, and inspiring them with confidence in God's mercy. But never let any human respect hinder you from warning them earnestly, or pointing out their evil condition, and the most suitable means for breaking the chains of their evil habits. Be firm in refusing absolution, when it is necessary to do so.

2. Examine the ignorant concerning the chief mysteries of the faith.

3. Do not fail to question ignorant and careless persons as to the faults, to which they are most liable, if they do not accuse themselves.

¹ S. Liguori. nos. 166—211.

4. [^kBe reserved in questions concerning purity, especially with women and children, so that you may run no risk of teaching them what they do not know.] If you feel any temptations yourself, in interrogating on these subjects, lift your heart frequently to God; keep some sacred image before your eyes, and be sure always to purify your intentions before entering the confessional.

5. Do not be content with questioning parents generally as to the education of their children, but go into particulars—such as, whether they take pains to correct their faults, to give them religious instruction, to keep them from bad company, &c.

6. When dealing with penitents whom you suspect of having kept something back through shame, refer to their past lives, asking if they are troubled about anything in it, and encouraging them to tell every thing. Such a course has saved many a soul.

CCCCXXXVIII. 7. However many penitents may want you, do not be in a hurry, or prefer confessing a number of people to giving fit care and attention to a few, or advising and warning them, as they have need.

8. When a penitent accuses himself of a mortal sin, especially if he has committed it several times, do not be satisfied with asking the number and kind, ascertain if it has been an habitual sin: and enquire as to the place, and the [sort of] person with whom he has sinned, so as to know whether there is a habit or an occasion to be broken through. Many Confessors fail in this point, to the great loss

^k I have left this caution, but do not doubt that, under our circumstances, they should be omitted altogether. Ed.

of souls, as, without such knowledge, it is not possible to teach the penitent how to conquer bad habits or get rid of occasions of sin.

9. Do not give absolution to any candidate for Holy Orders, who is in the habit of any vice, until you are satisfied that he has acquired that holiness, which is positively necessary for the holy office to which he aspires.

10. Beware of dissuading any one from a religious vocation through human respect. S. Thomas says that to do so involves mortal sin¹. Some Confessors, in order to please their parents, do not scruple to dissuade young people from such a vocation, telling the children that they are bound to obey their fathers and mothers. But the universal opinion of theologians, founded on S. Thomas's authority, is that every one is free to choose their state in life, and ought rather to obey God, if He calls them, than their parents. On the other hand, remember that you must not absolve such as intend to take Holy Orders, without having a vocation.

CCCCXXXIX. 11. When you confess priests, be respectful, but firm in admonishing them duly, and in withholding absolution, if it be necessary. Do not fail to urge them to fit themselves more and more to labour for the salvation of souls, according to the talents God may have given them, as also to be diligent in preparation before, and thanksgiving after celebrating, and in mental prayer, without which it not easy to be a good priest.

12. In matters of restitution, enforce it, if possible, before giving absolution.

¹ Quodlib. 3. art. 14.

13. If the penitent has received some offence, for which his enemy is publicly prosecuted, do not ordinarily absolve him, unless he remit it.

15. Cause every one to make an act of contrition, unless you are certain that they have already done so duly. Do not fail to teach the motives to attrition and contrition; and remember that, if the penitent comes without fit dispositions, it is your part, to try and lead him to them, before giving absolution.

16. Do not give absolution to penitents, whose sins, though venial, are habitual, unless they shew true contrition and a firm intention of amendment.

17. Only impose such penances as you know your penitent can fulfil, and give heed that they be medicinal and remedial.

18. Inculcate the practice of mental prayer on those who frequent the Sacraments, and require them to give an account, at all events, as to whether they have performed it. This is a powerful means for the salvation of souls. Do not hesitate to allow frequent Communion, whenever you think it will be profitable to your penitent.

19. When dealing with scrupulous people, above all things urge obedience upon them, and shew them the great danger of disobedience. Be firm and severe in exacting obedience; be decided and resolute in what you say; if you speak hesitatingly, you will only add to their disquietude. Give them general rules for the removal of their doubts, according to each person's wants; e. g. where a penitent has continual scruples as to his past confessions, forbid him to return to the consideration of any past faults, unless he is certain that they were mortal sins, and uncon-

fessed ; and be firm in refusing to hear any more about them. If you once yield, your penitent will always be restless. Some Confessors do great harm to souls in this way. In dealing with such as imagine everything they do to be a sin, enjoin a victory over scruples, and a free action in whatever is not plainly sin.

20. As to the choice of opinions, if it is a question of removing the penitent from danger of formal sin, do not follow indulgent opinions beyond the limits of Christian prudence.

21. In confessing women, deal with them as austere as prudence permits ; refuse presents, avoid familiarity, and whatever may lead to attachment.

22. Be humble, and do not presume upon your knowledge. Ask continually of God the light, needful to guide you through difficulties through the merits of Jesus Christ. "I prayed, and the spirit of wisdom came unto me." No Confessor can be wise and discreet, who is not given to prayer. In serious or perplexing cases, always consult those who are more learned and experienced than yourself ; and that especially, where you have to direct a very advanced soul, to whom God grants any supernatural gifts, you yourself being unpractised in such matters. Some men, with scarcely a pretence of any knowledge of asceticism, are yet too proud to consult others ; but no really humble priest can act thus. A humble mind will not only take counsel with others, but if it seems desirable, will readily commit the guidance of souls beyond his powers of handling to more experienced directors.

Counsels to Parish Priests.

CCCCXL. In order to complete these Counsels, I would briefly enumerate some of the special duties of parish priests, as regards their flock.

And first, the priest is bound to teach his flock the mysteries of the Faith, and those things which are necessary to salvation. He should keep a register of the children, so as to know, when any do not come to be catechised. Lacroix says even, that when a priest has ignorant parishioners who cannot come to Church, because of their occupations (e. g. taking care of the house, or of cattle,) their pastor should go and instruct them privately, "at whatever personal inconvenience." If this is more than he can accomplish, by reason of their numbers, he should at all events examine and teach them, with reference to their Easter Communion, and when they come for confirmation also. He should ascertain, whether masters and mistresses are able to teach their children the catechism well, and how to live in the fear of God.

2. The priest is bound to administer the Sacraments himself, whenever they are duly required by his parishioners. If he has a Curate, he is bound to examine into his life and knowledge, being himself responsible to God for all that is done. The parish-priest is bound to assist the dying, unless some other capable person do so instead; especially habitual sinners, who need such assistance above all.

3. He must be very careful about giving testimonials to candidates for Holy Orders, never doing so, unless he be satisfied as to their fitness.

4. The parish-priest is bound to inform himself

concerning those who are living in sin, in order to their reformation; e. g. of enmities, or differences between husband and wife, so as to bring about reconciliation, if possible. S. Thomas says, “¹ He who has the special care of another, ought to seek him, that he may correct him of his faults.” If any considerable person, above all, any priest, gives cause for scandal, and he himself cannot stop it, he should apply to the Bishop, that he may provide for it; neither fear nor human respect should make him neglect this duty; the good shepherd is bound to give his life for the salvation of his sheep.

6. If there are grave disorders in the parish, which the pastor is unable to rectify, he should try to have a mission in it, if he find no other means of remedying them. It is always a good thing occasionally to bring strange Confessors to the parish, so that those who are kept from their own pastor through shame, &c. may have others’ help.

7. The priest must not be content with merely uprooting what is bad, he must forward what is good, never wearying in exhorting his flock to partake of the Sacraments, and teaching and inviting his people to prayer, both public and private; especially mental prayer.

8. He is bound to preach on Sundays and holy days; and theologians say that a parish-priest is guilty of sin, if he neglects to preach during a whole month consecutively, or for three months at intervals, except during the two months’ absence from their cures which is allowed by the Council of Trent, subject to the Bishop’s approval. The same Council exhorts

¹ See above n. ccc.

pastors to feed their flock with the Divine Word according to their capacity, with plain simple sermons, such as can be understood; the faith being maintained as well as spread by the means of preaching, "faith cometh by hearing." The people will gather but little fruit from sermons, unless they are such as were preached by our Lord and His Apostles, "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;" as saith S. Paul. The Venerable Avila used to call those who preached out of vanity, not ministers of Jesus Christ, but traitors to Him; and P. Gaspard Sancio says, that such preachers are the greatest persecutors of the Church. Many souls are lost, which might be saved with apostolic teaching. S. Francis de Sales says that useless verbiage, sonorous periods, and flowing imagery are the bane of preaching, which should take for its sole end the instruction of those who hear, not their idle gratification; experience proves that such oratory does not convert souls. God does not co-operate with idle vanity. The Council of Trent says, "Let all who have cure of souls, by themselves, or (if they should be lawfully hindered) by others, at least on the Lord's day and festivals, feed the people committed to them with salutary words, according to their capacity." Remark the words "according to their capacity," which is not obeyed by those who do not study to adapt themselves to the level of their hearers.

CCCCXLI. In preaching, the pastor should often impress upon his flock, 1. that it is not enough to intend to avoid sin, but that we must try to avoid all occasions of sin. 2. He should urge the men to keep

What the parish-priest should impress upon his people.

away from public-houses, setting forth the sins and evils, which those who frequent such places are led into. 3. He should speak forcibly against the too common practice of impure conversation in the fields and in workshops, especially where children, girls and women, are present. How many have been perverted in this manner ! He should warn parents and masters to attend to this point. 4. He should represent the great sin of those who conceal any mortal sin, and then come to communion. 5. He should often dwell upon the necessity of contrition and good resolutions, even with respect to venial sins, and he should explain that true contrition implies such abhorrence of his sin, that he should hate and abhor it more than any other evil. 6. He should exhort his people to avoid imprecations, and rather to use pious ejaculations. 7. He should lead them to abhor all superstitious practices, or vain observances employed to cure ailments, or to detect thieves, &c. 8. He should exhort parents to correct their children, while they are little, and to keep watch over the company they frequent, and keep them from evil company. 9. He should teach all his parishoners to drive away temptations, especially those against purity, by invocation of the holy Name of Jesus. 10. He should say repeatedly and earnestly, that if any fall into deadly sin, he should at once make an act of contrition, to recover the lost grace, with a firm resolution to confess it as soon as may be. He should lay open to them the craft of the devil, who persuades sinners, that God forgives two sins as well as one, whereas God may have patience with them after the first sin, and strike or forsake the sinner after the second.

11. He will teach his people, how to pray morning and evening, making acts of thanksgiving, oblation, and petition, with firm resolution to avoid all sin, especially that, into which they fall most frequently: exhorting all mothers to train their children in these habits, as well as all parents to bring their children to the Sacraments. He will tell them that it is wrong to constrain their children to marry, or to interfere with their marriage, when lawful; and he will teach the children on their side, that it is wrong to marry against the just will of their parents. 12. He will constantly urge upon all his people the holy practice of commending themselves often to God, praying for perseverance for the love of Jesus. He will often say that God's grace and, especially, the gift of perseverance, are only to be won by prayer. "Ask and ye shall receive." Let him frequently set forth that wonderful promise given by our Saviour, "Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you." He should also recommend much practice of mental prayer, and teach his people how to make it.

CCCCXLII. "The grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." I am too tenderly interested in all that concerns you, to allow you to depart upon this important and toilsome mission to Ormuz, without saying whatever I think may be of any use to you in it. And first of all, I would have you bestow your chief attention on yourself, taking care that you are seeking nothing save God's glory, and your own spiritual progress with a view to His service. If you are actuated by these motives, you will be equally skilful and successful in winning

Counsels of
S. Francis
Xavier.

souls ; and you will be ready to practise every thing appertaining to Christian piety and humility. I would advise you then to catechise the little Portuguese children, the poor, servants, male and female, and the poor slaves ; and to this end you should go through the town with your companion, about mid-day, with a bell ; and invite all such to follow you into the church, when you will make them say some prayers after you, and some article of the Faith, which you will enunciate slowly and distinctly, so that they may repeat it after you. However busy you may be, do not neglect this pious practice, or devolve it upon others : for in such humble labours you have the great advantage of not only winning souls to God, but of also profiting the soul of him who performs them.

During your voyage, acquire as much information as you can about the customs of the people at Ormuz, and their prevalent vices. Learn, what is the chief character of their traffic and society ; what their corruptions and irregularities. For if you know the disease beforehand, it is easier to find the remedy ; and you will both pray more fervently, and learn more how to preach and teach the people, than by reading many books. Visit the sick, especially those in the hospital, frequently ; teach them that the sources of most bodily evils are those of the soul, and lead them gently to seek peace of conscience, by setting forth that, in taking away the cause, they will deliver themselves from the effect. When you have confessed them, give them the Bread of Life ; and do what you can to relieve their temporal wants also. Do the same with the prisoners, among whom you will find many who are bound with Satan's chains, captives in soul even more than in body.

Instruct the people often, how to pray well and examine their consciences, in order that, when they understand sufficiently how to perform these several acts, you may be able to lay them as a penance upon those who come to confession ; for I have found by experience, that, having begun them as acts of obligation for some time, they will continue them out of devotion.

As to preaching, do so as much as your strength allows. God's word is His children's bread, and should be distributed to them, so as to sustain and gladden them. To this end your doctrine, as well as your diction, should be clear, positive, moral, and profitable ; free from all subtleties, and scholastic niceties. Rebuke vice without any personal allusions, and let it be evident that you have but two objects in view, horror of sin against our good God, and pity for sinners, who are involving themselves in eternal loss. Dwell frequently upon the uncertainty of this life, and the certainty and unexpectedness of death. Let all your sermons include some reference to the Holy Passion of Jesus : sometimes it may be in the form of the sinner addressing his dying Saviour, or the Lord calling upon the sinner ; mingling severity and tenderness, and always aiming at the conversion of men's hearts and contrition ; to which add instruction concerning the Sacraments and rites of the Church, above all the use of Confession and the Eucharist.

Do not ever give up preaching, in order to hear confessions, which would be to neglect the general good for that of individuals.

Give all the time you can to the conversion of the heathen, and the extension of Christ's kingdom. Let your manner be gracious, cheerful, and calm : not

like those dreary men who frighten everybody ; the world is quite ready enough to dislike what is good, unless you make it acceptable. Never lay aside the holy gladness which befits God's servants ; and when you are constrained to rebuke vice, do it with such charity and kindness, that it may be plain, you wage war with the sin alone, and not with the sinner.

Let some of your time be daily spent in reconciling differences and enmities, so that when you leave your mission, you may be able to say with our Lord, "Peace I leave with you." And since, in order to calm the mind, it is often a good plan to conquer one passion by another still stronger, it answers well to take them by their self-interest, and to shew them that a law-suit will cost them more money and trouble than the thing is worth. I know that this peace-making and friendly arrangement of affairs is not to the taste of the lawyers ; but we must further attack the evil at its source, and make great efforts to bring back these also to a devout life and the fear of God, by means of the sacraments ; for once gain them, and it will be easy to put an end to the civil wars of law-suits, and to deliver people from this fourth scourge of God, which destroys more souls than pestilence and famine.

If you meet occasionally with those sinners, who have made a compact with death and hell, and who will not hear of giving up any of their habits of usury, hatred, impurity or rapine, whilst at the same time they hold in abhorrence both the remedies of these sins, and those who speak to them of them, you must persist, by God's grace, in the effort to cure them of these deeds of wickedness, and do at least as much for their salvation, as the devil does

for their ruin. You will make use therefore, for this purpose, of all helps divine and human within your reach, and you will regard this as your master-work, bringing to bear upon it all your sighs, your anxieties, your devotions, and your endeavours. It seems to me, that if they are not altogether hardened, it would be best to begin with great gentleness, by the considerations of the love and the reverence which they owe to their Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ, setting before them the Infinite sweetness of this King of Glory, and His Almighty power, from which there can be no escape. You must pass thence to threatenings of a miserable death, which is already hanging over their heads; and bring before them the eternal torments, which will follow upon their death. If neither the love of God nor the fear of hell have any effect in melting these hearts of stone, it may be of some service to prick these stubborn souls, by bringing vividly before them the punishments, which the vengeance of Heaven sends, sooner or later, on those who provoke it. You must needs set before them all the instruments which the anger of God makes use of, and which give a foretaste of hell even in this life, such as long and incurable diseases, inconsolable losses, poverty, disgrace, the downfall of families, the death of parents and children, imprisonment, shipwreck, the treachery of false friends, the insupportable outrages of a victorious and cruel enemy, the dishonour of wife or daughter, insanity, frenzy, or a thousand other accidents, which are like the weapons of divine justice, in order to call to account those impious men, who dare indeed to defy it; for a vivid representation of these matters which come before the senses, stirs up very often these carnal

souls, who only reason after the maxims of brute beasts, and feel only present evils, although those of eternity are infinitely more to be feared.

But in order to probe the wound to its depth, as this hardness of heart proceeds only from an entire forgetfulness of God, and a total abandonment of their own consciences, it is expedient to rekindle in them the spark of faith, if it is not entirely extinguished, and to make them understand that Atheism is the judgement upon continuance in sin ; for it is perfectly true that God, in giving up these rebellious souls to the bitterest of all torments, which is "a reprobate mind," permits with justice, that even reason should be wanting to them, as well as supernatural illumination ; so that, not rising any longer above the level of brute beasts, and believing only in that which they can touch or handle, they lose, with reason, the fear of the greatest of all misfortunes, that of losing God, and of losing themselves for all eternity.

There is much besides : for amongst these persons who have thus lost their consciences, you will find some so cunning and so hypocritical, that they will even seek to gain your friendship by every means : not, in order to gain the favour of God by means of your's, but in order to close your mouth to the just reproofs which you may address to them, and to acquire the reputation of honourable men, at the expense of your leisure and your intimacy. But the remedy to this evil is, to be on your guard, not to let yourself be surprised by the attractions or artifices of these deceivers. And if they make you presents, avoid them, as if they were nets spread to deprive you of your freedom, and of the duty laid upon you to reprove those who do evil ; not that you are to

repulse them at the first outset; but if they continue impenitent, then you must let them know, that if they will not make any other use of your friendship and of your services, it is better that they should depart, and that you, on your part, entirely renounce the friendship of those who wilfully live in enmity to God.

However, the refusal of presents does not apply to smaller ones, such as fruits and other slight gratuities, which do not lay a person so much under an obligation by receiving them, as they would cause offence by their rejection. But I am speaking of those gifts of great value, which act as bribes to those who accept them, and which force you either to be ungrateful or else slavish towards the donor. If any one should send you a large quantity of provisions, it would be advisable to dispense them either to the prisons or the hospitals, that it may be known that the poor have had the principal share of them, and that you have scarcely reserved any portion for yourself. This act of mercy will afford you an occasion of practising abstinence and poverty: and yet, in giving relief to other poor, you will afford a good example to all, and you will not cause to those who have sent you this charitable gift, the vexation which they would doubtless feel at your refusing it and sending it back to them.

When you undertake the treatment of some diseased conscience which has festered long in its vices, begin with learning all you can about its inclinations, affections and humours; ascertain, if the person in question be subject to some bad passion which drags him away from what concerns his salvation. If he be able to listen calmly, and weigh your admonitions, well and good; if not, it is well to wait

for some more available season, leading him on by gentle and charitable intercourse. If you win him thus gently at first, you may come a little closer, shewing him of how infinitely greater weight and importance Eternity is, than any human affairs, although we treat it with such contempt and carelessness, or even opposition. Afterwards you may go on to some rather more home-thrust, and when you have entirely gained possession of him, set before him rules for entire reformation, prescribing not only remedies for the past, but preservatives for the future.

When dealing with the soul's passions, the best way to calm or heal them is to remove their exciting cause, and so to diminish the importance attached to the object which rouses disquiet in the mind; e. g. nothing tends so much to allay anger or vexation, as being forced to see that the matter is not so important as we imagined it to be. If anger has been excited by some offence received, urge upon the offended man, that he should not impute that to malice, which very likely is only due to carelessness or imprudence; that God is chastening him by permitting these vexations; that while he complains thus sorely of a stranger, perhaps he himself has injured his friends; and that while many innocent persons are daily bearing much harder injuries, surely he will not fail to submit patiently to the judgement of God, Whom he has so offended and Who deals with him so leniently.

And since the passions have a tendency to close a man's ear to truth, to numb his soul and drive away good thoughts; therefore you must reiterate as many of these things, as your prudence and the listener's patience will permit. What I have said concerning

anger may be equally applied to other passions. But do not fail to press upon the angry man that, even if his indignation may seem to be just, a little calm consideration will shew that much of what moves him so fiercely, arises from his own imagination; and thus by patient and cheerful dealing, you may disperse the cloud of these annoyances, and at length be able to shew him, how to remedy the vexation altogether.

When you are going to take your place in that tribunal, where accuser witness and criminal are all combined in one; if the penitent be heavily burdened and little practised in confession, advise him to take at least two or three days to go over the actions and details of his past life; making some written notes, if his memory be uncertain; and teach him, that the most important part of his preparation does not consist in recalling his sins, but far more in that sorrow and inward repentance which he must strive to feel, asking it earnestly of God's Holy Spirit, Who can so powerfully soften men's hearts; so that his confession may not be, as it were, a mere recital of indifferent matters, but an accusation full of just indignation and self-abhorrence.

If, during his confession, the penitent is almost silenced by the shame and bitterness of his sins, as will sometimes be the case, when his conscience is very heavily burdened, be careful in no way to add to his distress by any marks of surprise, words or movements; but rather pitifully and tenderly encourage him to unburthen his soul, pointing out the boundless mercy of God; or, if need be, finding some excuse for him in the wiles of Satan and the delusions of his own ignorance, until he has recovered

heart to unburden himself entirely and to cast forth all the poison of his sins. It is also sometimes of use to set before him, that the chief of all sins is to abuse this sovereign remedy for sins, by rendering confession, not only imperfect, but altogether null, and not only useless, but so hurtful, that it turns a sacrament into an act of sacrilege, worse than all the crimes which he seeks to suppress, in that it changes a wholesome medicine into poison. But in order to combat this pernicious and fatal shame by every possible means, one of the best might be to assure the penitent, that we have had to deal often with souls far more criminal and depraved. And if fear and the sense of dishonour still possess him, like a deaf and dumb devil, you must as a last resource (although but rarely and with great precaution) bring into play a holy boldness, and speak to him of the sins and difficulties of your own youth; but at all events, while your penitent is struggling with the weight which rests upon his soul, spare no pains to help him to cast it off; one while, setting before him the love of that Saviour, Who died with Arms and Heart open to receive him; another time, reminding him of those holy men, in whom, though sin once abounded, grace did much more abound; and bidding him reflect, that he too may be of that number, if he can attain to an equal confidence and sincerity in confessing his sins, an equal courage in shunning them henceforth. When you have thoroughly purged out the poison of his wounds, then appeal once more to conscience; set the shame and weight of his sins before him with so much force as to lead him to full contrition, and abhorrence of his past life, bidding him judge himself, and if so be, escape the judgement of God.

It is often expedient to treat in private with magistrates, or men who carry on business on a large scale, on certain important points, concerning which it is needful to enlighten them, before entering on the confession itself. And this, in order to assist their memory by setting before them these general matters which may concern them, and to come to an agreement with them respecting several maxims and resolutions, concerning which they may be but ill-instructed. After confession, it is very often needful to defer absolution for some days, if the sinner has not attained a sufficient degree of contrition or desire of amendment, or if, having already often promised to make restitution, or to forsake occasions of sin, he still continues to fail in either of these points. In such cases, it is very good, and often necessary, to give them three or four days, during which they can read and meditate, and learn to weep over the Precious Blood of the Son of God, poured out for the entire expiation of their offences, and, besides pondering over the motives for contrition, to oblige them within this time to reconcile themselves with their enemies: to free themselves from the bad company whom they have permitted in their houses; to render justice to those, whose property they have withheld, and thus to break the other chains, which, till then, they have never thoroughly cast off. For, since promising is not performing, since they have broken their promises to other confessors, they should be made to fulfil, before their absolution, what hitherto they have always forgotten to perform, seeing there is no better security for the performance of a promise, than to anticipate the promise by fulfilling it.

You will come across certain men,—may God grant them to be few ! who have doubts concerning the very groundwork of the Faith, not believing in another world, or in the Sacraments ; especially in the Holy Eucharist ; partly through their own neglect, “ their souls having famished, while they forgot to eat their bread ; ” and partly from the contagion of the various Jews, Pagans, Atheists, &c. found in Ormuz ; partly too owing to the evil lives of some priests, which, above all else, bring discredit upon the holy Mystery. In order to win such men, you must begin by leading them to tell out all their doubts and difficulties, and then give clear and forcible instruction, solving their doubts, and enlightening their ignorance ; and not slackening your energy, until they are convinced. So soon as you have rekindled the spark of faith, nothing will tend better to confirm and nourish it, than a frequent and devout reception of the Blessed Sacrament.

There remains, besides, one dangerous part of conversation, respecting which the prudence of the servant of God ought specially to keep watch. Since the levity of the minds and humours of women occasions generally much trouble to their confessors, one of the best precautions which can be brought to bear, is to seek to train the souls of Christian men, rather than those of their wives ; for, nature having given greater stability and firmness to the mind of man, there is greater gain in instructing them, seeing that the good order of a family and the piety of the women depends most commonly on the example of the men : the wise man having said very wisely, Such as is the governor of a city, such will be its inhabitants. Besides which, by instructing the wives only

through their husbands, one puts a stop to a thousand subjects of complaints and of disputes, to which a contrary course would infallibly give rise. When wives assure you that they should live in greater repose, and would be able to devote themselves more to the service of God, if they could be set free from the companionship of their husbands, do not believe it; for besides its being a transient fervour of devotion which would evaporate on the morrow, their husbands would have good reason to take offence at it. Never blame a husband in his wife's presence, be he never so guilty; and never take the part of the one against the other; but listening to them with patience and equity, bring them to be of one mind, without giving any judgement as to their differences, so you will set yourself free from all suspicions, and them from all trouble. Certainly, one needs to walk warily and with much wisdom in such difficult times as these; and one must foresee long beforehand the evil directions things may take, in order so to act as to keep clear of them. For as Satan, our adversary, is "walking about, seeking whom he may devour," it would be an extreme imprudence not to distrust his artifices and his wrath, and to content oneself with having a good intention in what one does, without bethinking ourselves of the snares which he lays for us, nor of the sinister accidents of blame whereby he seeks to defame, and bring discredit on us.

Since I have now touched upon nearly all the parts of your duties, I conclude by re-iterating to you the recommendation of a general maxim, as important as it is notorious, that as we neither can nor ought to do *every thing*, you should have care, in the choice of

the occupations which you undertake for the glory of God, to prefer always those which concern the public good, to those which only serve to the convenience of one or two private persons; for it is quite evident that it is true of good works, that the more universal they are, the greater their excellence and their merit.

With these thoughts, and those which the Holy Spirit will suggest to you, I trust that you will reap as much fruit from your mission as I desire for you, praying our Lord to give you the grace to accomplish in all things His Holy Will.

Conclu-
sion.

° Priests of Jesus Christ, pastors and confessors, such are our duties; our ministry is laborious. Woe be to us, if it should hinder rather than help the souls committed to us! If it be so, you say, we will leave the confessional alone, and attend to your own salvation, apart from so much peril! But it is not so, you should regard the matter. What nobler, holier work is there, than to help souls and forward their salvation? "The most divine of divine things, is to coöperate with God for the salvation of souls^p." You may be sure that one morning, spent in the confessional, will do more for your own advantage, than a year spent in other good works. Nay more—it is well to interrupt meditation, reading, even the Divine office, and other holy functions, to hear a confession. I have very high authority for saying this. Baronius relates that, in the year 1034, the holy father was celebrating the second feast of Easter in S. Peter's at Rome, with all wonted pomp. He was sitting upon his throne, after the Gospel, when a pilgrim cast himself at his feet, in passionate repentance, crying out, "Have pity on me, holy

° B. Leonard. P. ii. n. 31. p Dion. Areopag. de Cœlest. hier. c. 3.

father, have pity, I would confess and be absolved from my sins." Who would not have expected the Pope to answer, that this was not a fitting time or place for such a duty, bidding the penitent retire and come again at a more suitable season? But no; the Sovereign Pontiff stopped the Service, heard the penitent, and returned to the Holy Sacrifice, when he had comforted and absolved him. The learned annalist says that he gives this for edification; and lest it should be censured by scrupulous ignorant men, he confirms it with the approval of S. Gregory; "Because, according to Gregory, no more acceptable sacrifice is offered to God, than the salvation of souls and the conversion of sinners." Nor should we only be ready to interrupt prayer and all other occupation to work for the salvation of souls; we should even be ready to accept the privation of the sight of God for a time to that end. S. Ignatius said, that he would willingly delay his entrance into eternal life, to forward the salvation of a soul, and that he would consent to live, uncertain of his own future, if by lingering on earth he should open the gates of Heaven to others. A holy Religious was wont to say, "if my foot were on the threshold of Paradise, and a poor sinner seized my garment, asking me to hear his confession, I would draw my foot quick back, and would not enter heaven until I had comforted that miserable sinner!" Will ye then not be moved to cast aside your indifference? Do ye not tremble to hear of that servant, of whom we read in the Gospel, who was condemned, because he did not trade with the only talent committed to him? And you, to whom our Lord has committed not one, but several talents. will you remain idle? How will you answer

before His tribunal? Do you answer, "Of a truth the work is very holy, but it is likewise very dangerous!" "What then! thou art afraid, where no fear is." Cast aside such panic fears, be of good courage, put your whole trust in God, and His All-powerful aid will never fail you.

My instructions have smoothed these mountains of difficulties. Be prudent in the guidance of habitual sinners, and such as live in proximate occasions of sin. They are the two shoals, on which confessors the most often strand and are lost. If they bring you the more difficult cases of simony, of contracts of marriage, of the purchase of benefices and such like, do not decide, until you have solved all your doubts by study and the advice of more enlightened men, and be assured that in following faithfully the rules laid down for you here, you will reach the haven safely, without shipwreck.

If unhappily you are one of those who have "left off to be wise and to do good," and who, without troubling themselves to think, simply lift their hands to loose all the world and bind themselves, I would say to you plainly, "Quit so divine an office which is not suited to you. The abuse of so august a ministry would but load you with countless souls whom you would send headlong into hell." But I hope that there are none such here. I hope that all, kindled with a fervent zeal, will act better than I have been able to put into words, and that labouring ardently for the salvation of others, you will have the unspeakable bliss of saving your own soul. May our dear Lord grant it so to be! Amen.

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